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THE TARANTULA OF TAOS; or, GIANT GEORGE'S REVENGE.

BY "BUCKSKIN SAM"—Major Sam S. Hall,

AUTHOR OF "OLD ROCKY'S BOYEES," "GIANT GEORGE," ETC., ETC.



WITH A WILD LEAP HANK CLEARED THE BAR, OVER THE HEAD OF THE CROUCHING TARANTULA, AND RUSHED INTO THE STREET.

The Tarantula of Taos; OR, GIANT GEORGE'S REVENGE.

A Tale of Sardine-box City, Arizona.

BY BUCKSKIN SAM,
(MAJ. SAM. S. HALL.)
AUTHOR OF "ARIZONA JACK," "GIANT GEORGE,"
ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE TARANTULA OF TAOS.

SARDINE-BOX CITY, a small mining-town, situated among the foot-hills at the base of the Pinaleno Range, in Arizona, has been brought to the notice of the readers of the "HALF-DIME LIBRARY," in two different stories, treating of the strange history of the town, and the startlingly tragical, as well as comic events which occurred among its denizens.

However, those who have not perused the publications named, will get an outline, or mere mention of the history of the place, up to the time at which we propose to continue the same.

The "city" consisted of one street, formed by two lines of rough slab shanties, approached from the north by the stage road, or trail, down a steep decline, over a spur of the range. The street ran north and south, the mountains towering to the northwest, but a short distance off, and a deep canyon winding below the burg.

The "Slip-up Mine" was a quartz lode, that had been discovered after prospecting for nuggets, pocket-gold and dust had been mostly given up; the "finds" which had brought the burg into being having become exhausted.

Many impecunious miners had been drawn to the town by the fact that the dust could be "panned" at the bottom of some of the canyons and gulches; but there were poor advantages for "wash," and "pay-dirt" was scarce.

The discovery of the Slip-up was an event that greatly encouraged those who had given up the place as a bad "locate," to remain, hoping that the quartz mills and furnaces would give employment to all, and cause the town ultimately to become a success.

But the principal reason with many for remaining was a good one, namely, they could not get away. It cost money in that land to travel; and if it was attempted on foot, there was almost certain starvation, to say nothing of other and deadly dangers.

The leading "hotel" in the burg was the "Nugget," which was of a little higher pitch than the other shanties, besides covering more ground, and being more pretentious in appearance generally.

The bar was some twenty feet in length, and fifteen in width. There was a kitchen in the rear, which also served as dining-room; as well as two chambers under the high-peaked roof, each of which boasted of a glass window, one in front and one in the rear—the only casements of crystal in the city.

The rival bar across the street, but above, and near the Post-office and stage stand, was called the "O. K." and did a thriving business at odd times, when the landlord of the "Nugget"—as was often the case—was too drunk to sling glasses across his bar, or pass a bottle from the shelf.

The "O. K." boasted, besides, of a gambling-room in the rear.

The landlord of the "Nugget," Hank Holbrook, as well as his wife, Marm Holbrook, were characters with whom we have much to do.

Both were of the same height and, general build, short and inclined to flesh; Hank's rotundity, however, being brought about more by the use of strong beverages than in the course of nature.

Both had round heads; but Hank's face was of a fiery red, and with little, black and bead-like eyes, set deep in his head, and, when not robbed of their brilliancy by whisky, twinkling with cunning.

Marm Holbrook was a worthy woman, pleasant enough to look upon, and revered and honored by the miners of Sardine-box City; she being, as Hank expressed it, "ther fust kaliker-kivered human—ther fust female woman thet ever struck ther locate."

Her neatly smoothed hair was always held in a small pug-like knot behind, by a horn comb, which she averred "war wored by her marm in ther States—ther best meetin'-house woman thet ever flopped a corn-cake, or slung a quilt together."

The particular morning upon which our story opens saw the town entirely deserted; the "city," or "sardines," as the denizens of the burg termed themselves, being all at the Slip-up mine, half-a-mile away at the range, unloading the quartz-mills, furnaces, etc., the advent of which had saved the town from being a "busted burg." These had been purchased and forwarded by Lena Reynolds, *nee* Lawrence, known among them as "ther Angel of Penarlayno Range," and who was the woman of all women in the eventful history of Sardine-box City.

Owing to the general desertion, Hank Holbrook, in his bar at the Nugget, was despondent; and, as usual when alone, consoled himself frequently from his own merchandise, and talking to himself, as was generally his wont when he had no one else to converse with. Occasionally, also, he would address himself to the principal adornment of the bar—a colored cut of Buffalo Bill, issued by Beadle & Adams of 98 William street, New York, and gotten up in a brilliantly illuminated style.

Hank was an amusing picture, as, with one hand in his pocket, and leaning against the bar, he rubbed his bald head with the other, and soliloquized.

His language was interrupted by a horseman riding up to the hitching-post, dismounting quickly, and entering the bar.

Had Hank not been about "half-cocked," with his "hammer-notch" well worn and ready to allow an easy slip, he would have noticed that his customer was anything but honest in appearance.

He was, in fact, just the opposite. He had a black, snake-like eye, beetling brows, low and retreating forehead, and a sinister and wandering glance, calculated to create aversion at once in any one accustomed to read character from the face.

The new-comer was about five feet seven in height, not over strongly built; and, from the cut of his clothes, and an apparent absence of arms, apparently from the "States." It was evident also, from his dusty condition, that his ride had been on the stage trail.

A black slouch hat was all right; but a black broadcloth coat, vest and pants, the latter worn over his boots, was a sight seldom seen on that far frontier.

His hair was long and black, and his complexion very dark; but the strangest of all was a cloth shirt of ebony hue, and a handkerchief of the same color secured loosely about the collar.

Hank was not a little surprised, and was not without some slight superstitious thrill, when, upon glancing out, he saw that the horse and wrappings of the stranger were likewise of the color of night.

But, if a slight suspicion did enter his mind that his customer was the arch-fiend, the quick order for whisky, with a request that the host should join him, banished everything of the kind from his mind, and he immediately set out a bottle and glasses, saying, as he did so, in a brisk, cheery tone:

"I'm mighty glad ter hev yer glide in on me, stranger, fer I war es blue es a hen wi' ther pip."

"I see you look lonesome," said the new-comer; "and that the town is deserted. What does it mean?"

"All ther 'cits' air et ther Slip-up, gittin' out ther heavy fixin's ter run ther ole hole; an' hit's 'bout time, fer Tom Jones an' ther hull caboodle hes bin drunk es b'iled owls fer three days."

Much conversation passed between the pair, which ended in the stranger in black requesting a history of the starting of the town; but not, however, until he had "pumped" Hank in regard to the present aspect of affairs, the names of the principal men of the city, their characters, and their connection with the present condition of the burg.

Hank liked nothing better than this; so he proceeded to seat himself on the bar, requesting his listener to take a "sot down" on the bench opposite, and began his narrative, squirting tobacco juice afar, by way of emphasis, and rubbing his bald pate at intervals most vigorously.

"When me an' Marm Holbrook glided this-away from Texas, we hedn't a hefty 'mount o' wealth, stranger. We lunged out from Tewson arter gittin' putty nigh busted, fur es dust went, arter a he ole jim-jamboree. Thet air ter say, I did; fer my ole woman she never errigates in nothin' stronger'n tea er coffee. Fust off I calkerlated ter slap up a shanty et ther Santa Rita Mines, en' stake out thar fer a while, sellin' p'ison; but thar war sich a heap o' cussed Greasers in ther biz thet I soon see'd thar war ne

show fer a edicated, civerlized white human ter make 'nough extry wealth ter 'nable him ter pour down 'nough ter keep him from suer-cidin'.

"Hit wouldn't 'a' bin livin', but jist lingerin'." "Sides thet, Marm Holbrook, she jist pestered me 'bout inter lightnin' consumption 'gards skutin' back Texas-way. Howsomever, I knowed we hedn't wealth enough ter lay in grub fer sich a dang'd long trail, an' I swored flat up an' down I'd strike fer ther Penarlayno Range."

"We hed a team o' three yoke o' fust-class Texas steers, thet I hed traded fer et Franklin, an' a middlin' good wagon, inter which I hed two bar'ls o' whisk', 'bout ten bushels o' corn-meal, an' a hefty supply o' bacon an' coffee. Sides this, I hed Marm Holbrook an' my traps an' togs, with a hull lay-out o' furnitur' that ther ole woman would bring along, spite o' all I could spit out ag'in' it."

"Yer see, stranger, when we war comin' from Texas-way, ther dang'd 'Paches stompeded my critturs at Devil's River, which war mighty nigh bu'stin' us up, fer I hed ter hire some Greasers ter haul my wagon ter Franklin, an' ther condemned cusses charged 'bout fourteen times es much es ther oxen war wo'th. Wa-al, do yer see—"

"But," interrupted the stranger in black, "I thought you were about to relate something in regard to the first starting of the town."

"I'm a-comin' ter hit direc'tly," explained Hank; "but s'pose we errigate, er hit mought git teejus."

Humoring the peculiar narrator, the stranger, although seemingly impatient and casting glances out at the door, clicked glasses and drank.

CHAPTER II.

AN INTERRUPTION.

HANK proceeded, after tearing off an extra chunk of "nigger-head" and wiping his lips on his sleeve, winking slyly, at the same time, at the cut of Buffalo Bill on the wall:

"Wa-al, arter we hed struck up ther Penarlayno Range an' glided 'long this-away, dang'd ef a few pilgrims hedn't found 'pay dirt' an' middlin' rich pockets right byer, an' hed thar claims staked."

"They hed sent some o' the'r outfit ter Tewson fer slabs an' nails an' grub, 'tendin' ter slap up thar shanties an' locate a burg. Howsomever, they war a poor set, without wealth ter count, an' war 'bout starved ter death. Thar pards hed bin gone so long arter slabs an' sich, thet they hed chawed all thar feed. Fact air, they war eatin' thar last refreshment, which war a box o' sardines, when me an' Marm Holbrook 'roved wi' our outfit."

"They see'd us comin' 'long 'mong ther foot-hills, an' they jist yelled so ormightly long an' loud thet Marm Holbrook crawled under ther tricks et ther bottom o' ther wagon, an' thar she lay."

"Yer see, my ole woman thought we'd run plum inter a passel o' 'Paches, an' I never let on ter her, but 'lowed her ter think thet-away, an' driv on, 'most 'splodin' wi' laugh."

"Fact air, I war so dang'd red in ther face, an' acted so 'tarnal strange 'bout hevin' a good joke on ther ole gal, hit made me so dog-goned tickled, thet I come mighty nigh bu'stin' my hull mersheenery. Ther pilgrims thought I war crazy, dead sure. But when I driv' up, an' told 'em I had my ole woman 'long, 'sides myself an' two bar'ls o' whisk', with consid'able permiscus grub an' things—when I spit ther infermashe at 'em, I'll sw'ar hit would ha' skeered yer ears off, stranger, ter ha' heerd ther yells what bu'sted outen them pilgrims' hungry beef-traps. Hit war a caution ter Comanches!"

"I reckon the ole woman managed ter crawl in a leetle funder under ther freight, an' wasted all ther breath she hed left, in a screech thet come nigh ripplin' ther wagon tilt. Ther steers war dog-goned fagged, but thet yell o' Marm Holbrook's jist turned 'em inside out, an' ther team broke inter a gallop, stompedin' up from ther canyon, one o' the fore wheels strikin' a boulder jist 'bout whar' the ole woman's bake-oven now air."

"Thet wrecked my outfit, fer ther wagon-tongue snapped off, an' ther oxen went jist a-hummin' in 'mong ther cedars. Ther ole woman war nigh dead when I yanked her out from ther freight."

"Howsomever, fust off, I rolled ther whisk' out from ther wreck, an' 'zamin'd ther bar'ls, knowin' thet ther hull o' our prospec's 'pended on ther p'ison. An' hit war mighty lucky fer Hank thet nary one o' them leaked a drop."

"I sot Marm Holbrook on a bag o' meal, et

ther foot o' ther bowlder, 'lowin' her back ha'r ter lean 'gin ther rock, while ther pilgrims stud roun' gazin' et her, wi' ther corn-cake traps wide open, an' eyes es big es Mexican dollars.

"At las', one on 'em, Tom Jones, what we arterwards 'lected sheriff, gi'n a le'p inter the air, an' he sez, sez he:

"Boyees, we air fixed clean through! Hyer's a pilgrim what's binkskuted this-a-way by Providence, fer ther special benefit of you, us an' ours. Thar's no use a-talkin'; we'll hev a burg right hyer inside o' a week. Stranger, ye're a pressed brick! What's yer handle, an' whar did yer glide from?"

"Pards, sez I, 'I'm Hank Holbrook; thet's my ole woman, an' this air my outfit. We come from Texas, way ter Tewson, 'tendin' ter meander up ther range; but ef thar's ary show hyer fer 'pay dirt,'—seein' I'm plum broke, an' can't progress very speedy on three wheels—reckon I'll locate right hyer."

"Then thar come some more he ole yells, an' ther pilgrims gut up a big stag-dance. 'Bout then, Marm Holbrook opened her peepers, an' gazed sorter skeered an bewildered. This made 'em all stop thar circus, an' jark off thar som-breros; an' ther soft-headed gerloots 'peared like a passle o' idgits, fer they hedn't see'd a kaliker-kivered human since thar ha'r war short.

"When ther ole woman see'd they war white folkses, an' noticed thet I war chuck-full o' laugh, she gut b'ilin' hot mad, an' shuck her fists at me.

"Hank, sez she, 'yer good-for-nothin' puser-lanious purp—why didn't yer 'splain this hyer biz? Yer knowed I war 'bout skeered ter death!

"Yer knowed I thought hit war 'Paches a-yellin', an' yer wouldn't 'splain ter me, ter relieve my mind. But I'll git even wi' yer—dang'd ef I doesn't!

"I'll skute back Texas-way erlone, wi' ther hull outfit jist es soon es yer git drunk ag'in; which I'm purty sure I won't have long ter wait."

"Thet's what ther ole woman spit out, stranger; an' when I gi'n a big smile, kinder on ther doesn't-keer-a-dang style, an' p'inted ter ther smashed wheel, which kinder made me safe on thet threat, she gut wuss an' wusser. But ther pilgrims gut round her, a-flatterin' of her es 'spec'ful es if she war Queen o' ther Cannerbull Islands, an' she gut some pacified. I reckon though I tuck no notice of 'em, fer I war stakin' out a claim, which war ther section o' dirt thet ther 'Nugget' war built on.

"Nex' day, ther slabs an' sich 'roved from Tewson, an' I opened up on ther whisk' biz, an' traded some meal an' tricks fer timber 'nough ter slap up ther Nugget."

"Why did they name the town Sardine-box City?" inquired the stranger.

"I'm a comin' ter thet," said Hank. "Yer see'd a cedar pole stuck up et ther head o' ther street, I reckon, es yer rid in?"

"Yes," was the reply, "I noticed it."

"Wa-al, thet air our flag-staff; an' ef yer'd gazed clost, yer mought ha' diskivered a sardine-box nailed on top o' hit, an' I opine hit air mighty 'properate. But I'll 'splain.

"Soon es we hed slapped up ther Nugget, I gi'n a free jamboree all 'roun', ter ther boyees; fer they hed slung in a heap o' work fer nix. We hed a slam-up sellerbration; an' ther ole woman, she manerfactured a 'Merikin flag outen a ole sheet an' some red kaliker, with blue jeans fer stars, an' a extry big one in ther middle fer Arizona, though hit warn't counted inter ther Union.

"Hit sot ther boyees jist 'bout plum crazy, an' they humped tharselves inter ther cedars ter cut a pole fer hit. They war all purty well soaked wi' terrantaler juice, an' ther poles what they brung in were mighty cork-screwy, but we s'lected ther straightest.

"We hed a fight settlin' hit, an' ther 'sult was, we hed three stiffs ter plant, ther fust thing.

"Then we hed a hefty argyment over what ther burg sh'ud be cog'd. Some on 'em wanted hit named arter Marm Holbrook, callin' hit 'Lizbuth, thinkin' that mought sound sorter 'spectable. But my ole woman gut mighty riled up 'bout hit, an' she sw'a'd she war a meetin'-house woman, an' thet ef they couldn't start a burg without so dang'd much fuss—killin' an' chokin' folkses—she wouldn't hev her name disgraced thet-a-way.

"Finerly we concluded ter call ther burg Sardine-box City, on 'count o' ther pilgrims a-gittin' down ter ther last grub, jist es I 'roved, which war a box o' sardines. We nailed ther same box on ther pole, but hit's rusty now.

"Ther pilgrims what 'roved wi' ther wagons

from Tewson made up a consider'ble crowd, an' we hed 'bout es heffy a jamboree es when Giant George 'roved from St. Louis.

"Marm Holbrook prayed some, fust off; but she couldn't stand hit. She levanted up ther range, an' crawled inter a hole in ther rocks, an' hung out thar all night, though she war p'ison fear'd of a coyote er a jack-rabbit. Fact air, we all hed ter turn out nex' mornin' an' hunt her up; fer ther boyees felt dead sure thet ther burg would go ter ther dickens, ef she hed gut chawed by a griz, er tuck by 'Paches. Ther ole woman hed gone inter ther hole on ther hum, like a blue streak, an' she left heaps o' her caliker behind her; fer she hed on her bestest dress, which she'd wore'd fer ther sellerbrate. I hed ter git ahint a rock an' laugh a spell ter myself when I see'd her.

"She war es wild es a hungry panther, an' yer mought 'a' bung a camp-kittle on each o' her eyes. I see'd she hed a ragin', ravin' tornado cork'd up fer me; an' I jist turned like a top, an' went down ther steep side o' ther mountain like a hawk lightin' on a rabbit.

"Marm Holbrook war arter me on ther whiz, an' I knowed she'd wallop me 'bout ter death. Howsomever, I 'membered thet she war mighty fear'd o' dead folkses, so I p'inted fer ther bone-yard, what we hed opened ther day afore, an' landed right straddle o' one o' ther graves.

"Thet war all thet saved me, stranger; fer ther ole woman, soon es she see'd I war suttin' whar ther stiff hed bin planted, turned pale, an' looked sick enough ter puke. Straight she stomped fer ther Nugget, an' up inter ther garret.

"Thar she squatted fer three days an' nights, while I sont up blankets an' grub ter her on ther sly."

"An' I air a-bouncin' down on yer like a averlanche o' smoothin'-irons, Hank Holbrook!"

This interruption came from a crack in the kitchen-door.

The voice continued:

"Yer'd better simmer down, fer I knows whenever yer gits a-blowin' 'bout my glidin' down ther mount'in, in thet unbecomin way, ye're a-gittin' yer skin full o' whisk'!

"Stranger, I war 'mong a passel o' wuss'n savages thet time, an' they hain't much better hyer now. I can't see yer, an' I doesn't keer ter; fer I'm down on all men-folkses 'ceptin' Giant George an' Arizone Jack an' Tom Jones, but I advises yer ter git; fer thet dog-goned, good-fer-nothin', whisk'-sucker husban' o' mine air purty nigh onter ther edge o' ther jim-jams!

"He hes 'em 'bout once a week; an' in a couple o' skips, he'll fly at yer like a bobtailed buzzard, though yer wouldn't think hit by his look. He scalped a cotton-tailed rabbit yister-day, an' he's a gin'ral terror 'roun' hyer.

"Hank, yer kin jist lay down ahint ther bar, an' I'll git a bucket o' water ter baptize yer with. Yer needs ther ordernance 'bout now!"

This most unexpected and singularly worded interruption to the host's story proceeded, as has been said, from the kitchen; and was, unmistakably, in a female voice.

Hank, at the first word, whirled around and slid behind the bar, disappearing from view; an action that caused the stranger in black to decide that the warning from the next room had not been given without good grounds.

He therefore stepped quickly from the bar to the street, mounted his horse, and turning the animal about, left the town at a gallop, by the same way he had entered it—that is, up the range, by the stage road, and soon disappeared over the spur of the range.

CHAPTER III.

RECOGNIZED.

THE stranger in black galloped fully a mile from the summit of the mountain spur, over which the stage road led, and arrived at a broken, rocky, and cedar-dotted gully. Here he came to a halt, and listened intently for a moment.

He then urged his horse into a cedar thicket, bordering the trail; and then, turning about, toward the point of entrance, he drew a Colt's navy revolver from a holster hidden by his coat skirt, quickly cocked it, and, with bridle-reins gathered firm, stood with his feet braced against a rock.

A moment later, a horseman appeared, approaching from the north toward the thicket.

He was a man of gigantic build, and most ruffianly in appearance. He was attired in a pair of greasy and tattered buckskin breeches, the fringe along the outer seams of which was mostly torn away, a blue woolen shirt, cow-

hide boots, and a broad-brimmed black sombrero, pushed upward in a "Hyer I air, dang'd ef I ain't" manner.

The inevitable brace of revolvers and bowie of the border were buckled about his waist, and his long, sunburnt hair was coarse and tangled, as was also his beard. His eyebrows met and mingled, shading deep-set, dark and treacherous eyes, which were small in comparison with the rest of the face, and had all the nervous glances of one who was suspicious of danger.

They were bloodshot, and wild in expression, and guilt had left its brand upon them; while his face and hands were bruised, indicating that he had not passed many days since being in an encounter with his fellow-man.

Altogether he was not the kind of individual whom one would care to meet on a lonely trail.

The condition of both man and horse proved that they had traveled far, and for many days.

As this gigantic borderer urged his steed, with spur and much profanity, toward the thicket, the man in black drove rowels home, and his horse sprung in one maddened bound, directly quartering upon the trail of the intruder; at the same time, leveling his revolver at the breast of the giant, as he yelled, in a quick, firm voice:

"Hands up, or you are a dead man!"

Never, perhaps, was a man more surprised, and at the same time filled with abject terror, than the southward-bound traveler.

His tanned and bruised face blanched as much as was possible, his eyes showed a deathly fear that was entirely out of place in one of his build and seeming experience; but this was only temporary. His bravado returned, when he saw but one man confronting him; but nevertheless, he threw up his hands, and brought his fagged-out horse to a halt.

"Dang my iron heart, stranger!" he exclaimed, after a moment's scrutiny of the man who confronted him; "yer run in a surprise-party on me, so suddint-like, thet I thought ther *Vigilantes* hed got me, dead sure. Yer see, I hes gi'n myself away, but I knows who I air a-talkin' to. Ye're ther pilgrim I see'd slingin' gab ter Doubloon Dan, in the cedars, 'bove Chico City, New Mex', 'bout a year b'ck, afore his Pumas got cleaned out by Rocky Mountain Al's crowd. Drap thet shutin'-iron, fer hit mought 'splode, an' bore my 'natermy."

The man in black lowered his weapon, with a grim smile of satisfaction, as he said:

"I thought I had struck my man. Once seen, you are not easily to be mistaken. What do you mean in regard to the Pumas being cleaned out?"

"I means what I hes spit out," was the reply. "Hes yer ary a chaw er terbacker 'bout yer? I'm plum bu'sted up fer weed and whisk'."

The man in black passed a silver tobacco-box to the huge rider, whose eyes brightened as he opened it; but his countenance fell, as the contents were displayed to his critical vision.

"B'lie me fer a bilious buzzard, stranger! What d'ye pack sich trash es that fer! Hit looks es though it hed bin chawed by a fine-toothed critter. I always uses plug. I'm natur'ly incernated ter hard things, often mastercatin' bowlders fer breakfast, an' pickin' my grinders with a buffler bull's horn.

"Ya-as, es I said, ther Pumas was cleaned, all thet war in ther cave 'bove Chico, an' Doubloon Dan turned up his toes et ther same time."

"Were all the gang killed?" asked the stranger, evidently deeply depressed at the news.

"Wa-al, not 'zactly. Thar war 'bout a baker's dozen on 'em what war out arter ther critters, an' didn't git kerral'd, an' they skuted down ther range when they foun' out how things hed gone."

"Were you with Doubloon Dan?"

"I come dang'd nigh bein' tuk in outen ther wet. Yer see, thar war a 'greement 'tween me an' Dan, 'gards some pilgrims what I war layin' fer, an' I hed jist left him ter git ther pints in Chico. When I see'd how things hed went, I levanted fer Arizone. Was yer interested in ther lay-out, stranger?"

"I was a friend of Dan's before he went on the road. But, never mind; I reckon you and I can pard, if you say so. Where have you been since you were at Chico?"

"Meanderin' 'bout 'mong ther mines; an' dog-gone my iron heart, I'm jist a-banker in fer a pay job. What yer gut on hand?"

"In the first place, have you any pards?" "Nary one. Thar was half a dozen o' our sort wi' me, but I skipped ther camp, fer I never goes inter a burg with anybody. I heard o' Sardine-box City, thet hit war a purty fresh strike, an' I concluded ter glide in an' see what I could make on ther loose.

"I knows some o' ther 'citz'—thet is, I knows 'em by repertash. I heerd yer war a-workin' this section, though I didn't know yer cog. I 'd-entified yer when I fust heerd o' yer rig. What's yer handle, now, an' how many boyees hes yer gut?"

"I am known as Capitan Black, and I have but seven men left, for I had a hard fight down range, not far from Tucson, and had to git up and dust. But I have a job on hand that will pay big.

"Early this morning I was up range, and saw you in camp. I thought I knew you, and resolved to lay for and get you to join us. There is a rich woman in this burg below here who must be corraled, and her wealth also. I have taken steps to secure her, and I want you to go at once into the town and get all the information you can in regard to her.

"The infernal fools in Sardine-box call her the Angel of the Pinaleno Range. Find out where her money is kept, for she must have brought a large amount from the States. She has gone to Dead Man's Gulch, and the only man whom I fear in Arizona is with her. His name is Giant George. I reckon you know him, or of him—most of our sort do. He cleaned out the 'Panthers' some time since.

"I count on my men getting a chance to secure the woman. A cousin of hers from St. Louis is the man I'm working the job for. If she goes under, he will come into her property, which is a large fortune.

"He's a cowardly, suspicious cuss, and insists upon seeing her die before he will believe that she is dead. That shows he is smart enough in one way; for I wouldn't murder her, as you know, nor do I believe you would."

"Wa-al, hit would take some 'dust' to make me choke her off. Hit's jubous biz, an' mighty onlucky."

"W' at name do you go by now?"

"I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos till yit—dog-gone my iron heart ef I hain't! I kin chaw up most anythin' from a buffler bull ter a bowlder; but I ain't feelin' chipper, on 'count o' skeercity o' whisk', an' ther ding-dong o' my iron heart hes gut down ter ther flicker of a June-bug's wing."

"Well, old pard—for so I will call you—that can soon be remedied. Here is gold, and when it passes from my hand to yours, our interests become common. Is that understood?"

As he said this, Captain Black passed a roll of coin to the burly ruffian, who grasped the same eagerly.

"Thet's ther way ter put hit, Cap' Black; an' I'll roll inter Sardine-box City, an' 'stonish ther natives, same time keepin' a eye an' ear open fer boss biz.

"Thet Giant George air a hellyun. Hit takes a six in hand, an' a big ox-train ter block his trail. But I'll watch out fer ther cuss. He run me outen one burg 'bout two year back, an' come nigh havin' me choked off; but I reckon he's plum forgot me by this time. Yer wants ter find out whar this Angel hes hid her duck-ets; an' I'm ther perrarer promernader thet's goin' ter strike her 'cache'!"

"I hope you will, Tarantula; and there's a cool five thousand for you if you do.

"But, if it is not to be found, the Slip up Mine has got to slip up. The machinery must be blowed to smithereens; for this Carlos La Grange, the cousin of Lena Reynolds, otherwise the 'Angel,' is as revengeful as Satan.

"He swears that every one who stands between him and this property, shall die; but he hasn't got the sand to kill a jack-rabbit.

"However, we needn't care a continental, as long as he pays. I've had a hard run of luck lately; lost twenty men within three months."

"Yer hes hed hit rough—dang my purser-lanimous pictur', ef yer hain't! But whar air yer camp, an' whar air ther cuss Carlos La Grange?"

"We are 'holed' over the range, straight northwest from Dead Man's Gulch. You can scout around the Slip up Mine, about night; and, if you hear two black wolf yelps, followed by a third after a short interval, you can go to the cedar thicket, whence the sounds proceed, and you will meet either myself or one of my boys. Then you can report all your news.

"If they suspect or recognize you in the burg, you must make a run up the canyon to Dead Man's Gulch, where, in a clump of cedars at the base of the mountain, near two graves, you must wait until some of my men come to guide you to our rendezvous.

"I shall ride on the up trail for a few miles, to see if I can pick up those men you mention. Before noon, I judge, my boys will have secured the 'Angel.' We have been after her

a long time; but she was captured by Apaches the very night she arrived.

"The reds skipped the town, robbed the coach, and took Lena Reynolds, Hank Holbrook and his wife captive. But they were rescued by Giant George and the 'citz'; thus disappointing our friend Carlos, but giving me what I hope will be a paying job.

"Hang it, I'm getting more and more desperate every day. This masquerading never did suit me."

"Dang my iron heart, Cap. ef I shouldn't like ter see yer onc't as yer air on ther ram-page!"

"Yer 'pears now more like a gospel-slinger nor ary other kiader human.

"But, I sw'ar, I'm as dry as a sand hill, an' hungry 'nough ter swaller a pickled Piute! I reckon I'll wait until I kin see Capitan Black as he really air. Dang'd ef I doesn't; fer mebbe so hit'll put an extry ding-dong inter my iron heart, givin' me more vim fer futur' fightin'!"

As the Tarantula was speaking, Capitan Black, as the former had termed himself, urged his horse, a magnificent animal, into the cedars, and in a few moments returned; but would not have been recognized as the same man.

His slight beard had disappeared, showing a passably handsome face, garnished now by a long, silky mustache and imperial.

His coat had been cast aside, as well as his roomy black pants; and he now appeared in buckskin breeches, heavily fringed, and studded with silver buttons. His shirt was richly ornamented, and fringed also; but the skin of both garments was dyed black, and the breeches were tucked into high-topped alligator-skin boots.

His sable sombrero was looped up at the left side by a singular and suggestive emblem, to wit, a skull and cross-bones in heavy engraved silver.

About his waist was a black belt, with holsters and scabbard of the same hue.

It held a pair of silver mounted Colt's army revolvers and a huge bowie-knife; a heavy square silver clasp fastening the belt in front, upon which was deeply cut the same dread symbol, a skull and cross-bones.

He sat his noble, symmetrical steed with a grace that was perfect; and both horse and man seemed to have become freed from a restraint, and relieved from a heavy load.

As the animal sprung from the cedars, the two presented a fine picture, and drew from the astonished giant an exclamation that was characteristic of the man.

"Dog gone my cast-iron heart, Cap' Black, I pass! Yer kin take ther 'pot,' sweep ther board, an' I'll crawl under ther table, stick my head under my wing, an' sing ther doxology ter myself. I'm a-humpin' myself on extry jumps, ter git this job through hunk; an' I pards wi' yer from this on, ef I lose a couple o' my legs!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Capitan Black. "If you lose a couple of legs, you'll have plenty left, if you're true to your name, Mr. Tarantula. But biz is on the bill. I'm on up the range now, like a streak. Mind well my instructions. So long!"

"Whopp-er-up! Whooper-e-e-e!"

Thus yelled the giant, as both men started; one speeding toward the north, the other south.

"Hyer I am a-comin', with a pocket full o' dust! I kin tell these sardines I'm fish-hungry, an' sp'ilin' fer p'ison. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, what never lost a leg!"

"Dang ther ding-dong! I'll fotch hit back inter my iron heart, afore a red c'd scrape out a arer. Hurrah fer Capitan Black an' the Terrantaler—ther perrarer perambulator an' meanderer o' ther mountings!"

Thus on, toward Sardine-box City went the burly desperado; while, up the range, skimming the earth like a bird, went the glossy, sable steed and its black-garbed and black-hearted rider—both on missions that threatened to bring disaster and death down upon a long-suffering woman, and upon the citizens of a new town, that had long struggled for bare existence, and was now but beginning to feel that success, happiness and prosperity were within their grasp.

CHAPTER IV.

GIANT GEORGE.

It was high noon of the same day on which Capitan Black and the Tarantula of Taos met that a party of males and females, five in number, might have been seen traveling the windings of a deep canyon, a few miles to the northwest of Sardine-box City.

The banks of this canyon were steep and insurmountable, except at two points near the town, but higher up, the gullies and wash outs, formed by the mountain torrents during rains, afforded ingress and exit.

The leader of the party was a man of large size—in fact, gigantic—habited in a suit of buckskin, with rough boots and black slouch hat, all showing service, while at his belt were the usual revolvers and bowie. The clasp of the belt bore this inscription:

GIANT GEORGE.

Presented by

LENA REYNOLDS, nee LAWRENCE.

"The Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range."

The man was one who would anywhere command attention and confidence. His blue eyes were keen and wand'ring, as if inured to scenes of danger, and revealed in their clear depths an honest, true and brave heart, while fearlessness and recklessness were shown in every glance.

A man of iron nerve was he—that could be seen at a glance—and one who could be depended on to the very death.

Close behind him rode a young but well developed man, fresh and rosy, free and fearless, as any one would at once decide.

Fancifully fringed and tastefully ornamented buckskin breeches, a blue woolen shirt, loosely confined at the throat, high-topped boots of fine workmanship, and a black sombrero, made up his costume—all new and fresh, as they say on the border.

Eagerness flashed from his eye as he swept the wild surroundings with a gaze that seemed to court conflict with man or beast.

A brace of army revolvers and a bowie, all highly ornamented in silver, were held at his waist by a belt, upon which was engraved:

ARIZONA JACK.

Whoop her through or bu'st.

Taken altogether, Arizona Jack was one who sustained fully the legend beneath his name.

No scout in the far Southwest was more noted for daring deeds and skill in following the fierce Apache than Giant George; and the recent terrible experience in the history of Sardine-box City had proved Arizona Jack—then a "tenderfoot," who had arrived just in time to participate—well worthy of the confidence and friendship of the citizens. In fact, he had been claimed as a pard by Giant George, and had proudly accepted the honor.

Next to Jack rode a female, clothed entirely in black. Her face was white as the driven snow, and stamped with great grief and suffering. And few on earth had been called upon to bear more than she had done, for her loved and only brother had been murdered not far from this very spot, and in seeking to avenge his death she had been captured by his murderer, and rescued by Giant George. Soon after this event she had been united in marriage with one who had been parted from her through the villainy of the same man who had murdered her brother.

The wedding had been solemnized at Sardine-box City—the first and last ceremony of the kind performed there—and Giant George with his famous burro, Don Diablo, had accompanied the happy pair to St. Louis. The bride, Mrs. Reynolds, was none other than Lena Lawrence, known in Sardine-box City as the "Angel o' ther Penarlayno Range."

The gold of her murdered brother, Sam Lawrence, which Giant George had accidentally discovered, had made our heroine a very wealthy woman.

But the party had not long been in St. Louis, when poor Lena lost husband, father and sister—her only near relatives—by yellow fever; and now, disconsolate and broken-hearted, she had accompanied George back to Arizona, only to fall into the hands of the Apaches, as has been stated, but to be providentially rescued, along with her fellow captives, Hank and Marm Holbrook.

At the same time, a beautiful Castilian girl named Marietta, was saved from the power of the Indians.

The mother of Marietta, a half-insane woman, known as Warnitta the Wild, was rescued on the same occasion. These two made up the little equestrian party. Both of them purposed to return with Lena Reynolds, now on a visit to her brother's grave, to Tucson; but, as ever, man only proposes.

On, in the order we have mentioned, rode our friends for some distance along the bed of the canyon; when suddenly Giant George turned to the right, and entered a dark gulch which led toward the range, all following, and disappearing from view.

Although there was the full glare of a noon-day sun above them, all was cool and twilight within the deep, narrow gulch.

It was a place to inspire awe; but the whole party seemed only filled with sympathy for the sad and pale faced woman whom they accompanied.

None were more affected by the situation than was Giant George himself.

For some distance they traversed the deep gulch, and then the bright sunlight displayed an opening in front of them, revealing the fact that the head of the canyon terminated in a huge basin.

Here George and Arizona Jack halted, but Lena Reynolds and the two Castilian women passed on, crossing the basin, and disappearing within a clump of pines at the base of the mountain.

To the west of this *motte* of pines, the side of the basin was more broken, and easier to surmount, and was covered with a growth of stunted cedars.

At this point, or above it, there was also a break in the range, seemingly formed by some convulsion of nature.

Lena Reynolds preceded her companions, and entering the pines, passed to the further extremity of the same, nearly to the base of the cliff, where upon a double mound—evidently two graves—she threw herself prostrate and sobbed bitterly.

The woman Warnitta and her daughter, out of respect for her grief, proceeded no further than the border of the trees, where they seated themselves side by side.

Giant George and Arizona Jack stood near each other, holding the lariats attached to the necks of the horses.

"Dog-gone hit, Jack," said the former, in a low voice, "I'd a heap rather make a break plum erlone through a big Pache village than to come ter ther gulch with ther Angell! Hit'll spile my appertite fer a half moon. I kia allers see Sam Lawrence die over again, es he did hyer, an' poor Terrif-a-hangin' head down on ther cliff yonder.

"Dang them cussed Paches! But we paid 'em up purty well fer thet biz, an' no mistake.

"She's a-cryin' herself ter death on the'r graves, jist es she did when I brung her hyer fust off, when them dang'd spies of El Capitan scooped her."

"Do you think it safe there now, George? I am feeling strange and suspicious."

"What c'd harm her now? We-uns hes cleaned out most o' the reds, 'ceptin' ther squaws, an' every one o' El Capitan's Panthers we made turn up toes nigh four moons ago. I doesn't b'lieve thar's a crooked human within two days' ride and more."

"From what I know of this section," said Jack, "I don't believe things are safe at any time. There seems to be a curse on this town of Sardine-box."

"But give me a history of things connected with the first arrival of Mrs. Reynolds in the burg. It will serve to kill time. I mean the main points."

"Wa-al, Jack, I ain't a man of much lingo, but I'll gi'n yer ther rough p'ints. Fust off, Sam Lawrence and Willerby, what war arterwards ther outlaw chief, El Capitan, left St. Louis together fer ther West. Willerby shot Sam an' robbed him up Colorado-way, leavin' him fer cold meat.

"Afore Willerby left St. Louis he'd gut Sam an' Lena's dad ter purchase a heap o' bad wild-cat minin' stock, what ruined ther ole man.

"Yer see, Willerby pertended ter be in love with Lena, but she war begaged ter Reynolds—suar' young man—an' she refused ter hev Willerby; so hes war'd revenge, an' he tuck hit.

"He ruined her dad, es I said, an' writ false letters, an' broke up Reynolds, who war a mate o' his'n an' Sam's at school.

"He then shot Sam, arter gittin' him West, but Sam didn't go under. He comed hyer an' struck it rich, savin' a heap o' nuggets, which he stowed away up range, an' which I foun' arterwards.

"Wa-al, Willerby turned road-agent an' gin'ral robber, an' he happened down hyer an' got sight o' Sam, an' see'd thet he bedn't killed him up-country. Then he plugged Sam ag'in in this hyer basin, an' left him ter die; but I comed 'long an' nussed him in ther pines yunder fer a week, until he 'skipped over ther divide.'

"Howsomever, afore he died, he writ ter Lena, an' she comed on from St. Louis ter Sardine-box City, havin' taken a afferdavy ter hev her revenge.

"Sam bed writ 'bout me, so she hunted me up, findin' me et Sardine-box, when ther citz

war goin' ter string me up, thinkin' I war crooked.

"Jist then, Lena's ole lover—Reynolds—comed 'long, an' tuck a han' in ther fight. We laid Willerby, er El Capitan es he called himself, out cold in his own cave, an' cleaned ther gang out. Then Lena an' Reynolds gut hitched, an' I scooted ter ther States—me an' Don Diablo—'long o' them; but ther yaller fever comed in, an' Reynolds an' Lena's sister an' her ole dad all died in one week, an' I brunged her back ter Arizona.

"But I'm fear'd she'll go under 'fore long, Jack; an' she hain't no nigh relations nowhar.

"Es bad es she war feelin', she never forgot ther citz; an' she sent on a wagon-train o' quartz mills, an' furnaces, an' tricks fer ther 'Slip up.'

"But, es I war sayin', she seems like ter soon be a real *bony fido* angel up yunder; an' when she is, Giant George 'll wander roun' ther perrars so chuck-full o' sorror thet he'll git tuck, an' be toasted by Paches afore a moon hes passed."

At this moment piercing shrieks cut the air from the direction of the *motte*, and the face of Giant George turned ghastly, and his eyes became fixed on the pines, as he stood for the moment frozen in his tracks.

"By Heavens! pard George, it is as I told you. There's another load of misery dumped upon us."

Before the words were well out of Jack's mouth, Giant George bounded like a madman across the rock floor of the basin, followed by Jack.

Warnitta and Marietta sprung shrieking, with pallid faces, out from the *motte*; but Giant George heeded them not, for past them he shot, crashing through the pines to the graves of Sam and Terrif.

Grasping the branches and crashing through them, in his terror and anxiety, while he fixed his glassy eyes upon the sky between the cliff and the *motte*, his features drawn in an agony of grief, his lips too tightly compressed to allow him to articulate, George reached the two graves among the pines.

Lena, the "Angel o' Penarlayno Range," was gone!

CHAPTER V.

HANK'S NEW CUSTOMER.

THE sun was high in the heavens, and it was extremely hot, as the fagged-out horse of the Tarantula of Taos reached the summit of the rocky spur and passed down the decline toward Sardine-box City.

The face of the burly borderer expressed not only great suffering of body, but surprise as well, as he gazed down upon the deserted town; for all the population, as we have seen, had gone to the "Slip up" Mine to witness the unloading of a train of wagons, which contained the necessary tools and machinery for its development. These had arrived three days previous.

"Dog-gone my cast-iron heart!" exclaimed the giant outlaw, in his wonder and disappointment.

"What in dangnation's ther difficult' down yunder? Ef thet ain't a empty sardine-box, I'm ther boss pervaricator o' Arizona; an' ef ther burg ain't busted flat, I'll chaw flint fer grub ther remainder o' ther moon.

"What in thunderation 'll I do? Hyer I air, jist 'bout half dead, arter skutin' clean from t'other side o' nowhar, with only p'ison 'nough ter last me half-way. I'm sick enough ter puke up my in'ards!

"I'm smashed and bu'sted up gineraly, ter say nothin' 'bout ther bug-juice thet's gone dead inside my stomach, an' left me without vim, an' es slimsy es a eel what's been left high an' dry arter a rise an' fall.

"Dang'd ef I don't burn every dang'd shanty in Sardine-box City out o' pure cussedness, ef I can't shake out some whisk'. I'm gittin' es desprited es a hungry griz, 'count o' hev'in' ter skate out o' Tophet Diggin's when I had a dead thing on makin' a big steak.

"Howsomever, I did bleed some tender buffs outen consider'ble dust, which air all thet hes kept me from wiltin' on ther trail. An' now Cap Black hes panned out extry rich, wi' prospect's ahead. Hit does me good, I'm hang'd ef hit doesn't, ter feel in my pouch; but ef ther sheriff o' Tophet Diggin's hed know'd who I war, he'd 'a' kep' ther bull o' my wealth, an' strung me up to a limb besides. I considers I'm jist ther most lucky cuss on ther range. Hit's pure, solid, un'dulterated, b'iled down, stud-

boss luck thet I run ag'in' Capitan Black—chaw my ear off ef hit warn't!

"I hope thet I won't run ag'in' thet big scout, Giant George; fer I've got too much tongue, an' too little sand ter buck ag'in' him, without a free pass on ther lightnin' 'spress ter kingdom come.

"Wa-al, hit's whisk' er 'skip over ther divide,' wi' ther Terrantaler o' Taos this trip, ef I doesn't strike bug juice speedy. I'm ter-tur'd wuss an' wuss every step my nag takes, an' ther critter air 'bout as bad off es I is."

At this moment, the giant outlaw, after passing down the deserted street, came opposite the Nugget Hotel; it being now about an hour and a half since Capitan Black, in disguise, had left the same.

"Hooray!" exclaimed the Tarantula, in extreme relief and thankfulness. "Dang'd ef thar ain't a show fer liquid 'freshments, ef thar's any in ther condemned burg; an' by the look o' things I kin help myself.

"What in thunderation air up wi' ther folkses o' this locate? Thar hain't bin no cyclone er water-spout ter sen' them on ther fly. Ef thar hed, ther shanties 'ud be flat, an' scattered permisc'us like.

"Nugget Hotel! Thet's all hunk fer a house cog; but Bug-juice Bazar suits me better. Ther boss bar o' Chico City war named thet.

"Howsomever, I hes ther nuggets, ef thar's any one ter sling p'ison; ef not, I prospects fer liquids on ther hum."

Urging his weary horse to the end of the building, and tying the end of the lariat to a cedar bush, allowing the animal free range for about forty feet, the Tarantula bent his way with wavering step to the front entrance of the hotel.

Stepping into the doorway in a stiff manner, the giant peeped around the screen into the bar-room, where a tempting array of decanters met his eager view. Not a human being was visible, though there was every evidence, both within and on the street, of recent occupation.

Only for an instant, however, did the Tarantula stand by the screen. In two strides he reached the counter, leaned over it and grasped a decanter with frantic and nervous haste, his eyes flashing with insane longing.

The glimpse of a man, seated on a low stool behind the bar, did not in the least cause any hesitation in his frenzied movements.

The man was Hank Holbrook who sat thus, his eyes closed and his mouth wide open.

The Tarantula did not take time to secure a glass, but raised the decanter to his lips and drank long and deep of the fiery liquid. He then gazed around, smacking his lips and winking his eyes with the most intense satisfaction, muttering:

"Dog-gone my pure open an' shet luck, ef I hain't struck a soft thing, I'm a liar by the watch!

"Thet air Hank Holbrook, I knows dang'd well; an' he hes bin runnin' his own bar es he used ter long ago. I hes heerd 'nough 'bout him ter recog' ther cuss. He fust opened out whisk' in a wagon et ther Santa Rita Mines, b'low Tewcson.

"Ther cuss pours down more whisk' than he shoves over ther bar, an' I'll help him lower ther liquids.

"Hyer goes ag'in!" raising the decanter to his mouth, "hyer's luck ter everybody what doesn't buck ag'in' ther Terrantaler. Keep off my grass, pilgrims, an' yer won't git hurted!"

Again did the huge scoundrel take a long draught. Then, with the most intense satisfaction, he began to look around the bar.

He was evidently now recovering his vim. His muscles were regaining their natural strength, and his blood free circulation.

The pictorial adornments of the bar, of which mention has already been made, caught his eye, and he strode up in front of the most attractive of the lot, in evident astonishment and admiration.

"Dang my cast-iron heart!" he muttered, "ef thar ain't some purty pictur's!"

"B-u-f-f-a-l-o-o B-I-I-I!"

"Thet means Buffer Bill, though they doesn't know how ter spell hit. I knows his figger-head too ormighty well; an' hit'll be fortygraphed on my brain-box until I turns up my toes!

"He'd gi'n a heap ter git a lariat roun' my neck; an' he did come cussed nigh hit when I stole his nag thet he calls Buckskin, the dang'd-est runner thet ever knocked seed offen perarer grass.

"Thet war when Cody war huntin' on ther Platte; but, dang him, he follered me with a nag, jist a-flyin', an' run in cn me when I war

in camp, in ther bottom. Hit war a close call fer ther Terrantaler. Ef I hedn't 'a' lunged inter ther river, an' skuted like a alligator gar fer t'other side ther drink, he'd 'a' gut me dead sure an' sartin.

"He'd dang soon stop my wind, an' ther ding-dong o' my iron heart, ef he run ag'in' me now; fer he knows I tuck a couple o' pops et his right-han' pard, Wile Bill. Gee-hoss-a-fat! Hit makes me shiver ter think o' thet time. Howsomever, ther dark saved my carkiss ag'in; but I wouldn't promernade my 'Pollo-like form roun' ther Union Percific fer all ther dust and nuggets 'tween ther No'th Park an' ther Grandee.

"So long, Cody!"—with a wave of his hand. "I'd a heap ruther gaze et yer pictur' then yer orig' Simon-pure flesh, bone, and bleed.

"Beadle au' Adams ain't 'tall smart, er they'd git my 'Pollo-like natermy pictur'd off in my bestest war-paint. Hit would be a big hit, an' 'u'd sell like hot tortillas durin' a norther in Santa Fee.

"Ain't I a border hero? Wa-al, I should smile, plum out loud! I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, ther Darin' Devil o' ther Divide!

"Buffle Billy!"—with a wink, and a touch of sombrero rim, and scraping one foot backward on the floor—"I'll see yer ag'in, an' talk biz, arter my iron heart gits down ter hits reg'lar ding-dong. I kin clean out ther hull o' Nebraska'. Nothin' human kin buck ag'in' me; but, Mistur Cody, yer needn't ter run in yer hull lay-out on me at onc't. Glide up ter ther scratch a couple et a time, an' I'll start ther most 'stensive stiff-yard in Nebraska'. Es I sed afore, Buffle Willyum, I'll see yer later. Whoop-er-up! Whoop-er-e-e-e!"

Emphasizing his words with many grotesque grimaces, and much show of sarcasm and bravado, the Tarantula closed his interview with the cut of the Hon. W. F. Cody, and turned to scrutinize his host.

Leaning over the plank that served as a bar, he saw that the landlord still slept soundly—in fact, the slumber born of deep and frequent potations.

All at once a most cunning and comical expression overspread the desperado's face; he grasped his bowie, reached for a large cork that lay on the shelf, cut out a triangular section from one end of it, and punched several holes in the opposite one.

This done, the Tarantula, evidently bent on mischief, and totally disregarding the important mission on which Capitan Black had sent him, took some matches from a box, and inserted the clear ends of them in the holes which he had punched in the cork, reserving one to ignite.

He then moistened and rubbed into a small ball, a piece of tobacco. Then, by a dexterous movement, he ignited the matches, placed the forked end of the cork over Hank's nose, thus closing up that breathing channel; at the same instant, he dropped the ball of tobacco into the wide-open mouth of his victim.

This done, the Tarantula dropped from view, below the counter, leaving the sulphurous smoke and flame flaring hot in the face of Hank.

With a wild yell, the latter sprung to his feet, the act forcing the tobacco into his throat and nearly strangling him. Almost blinded as well as suffocated, the host of the "Nugget" stood for an instant, scarce knowing whether he was on earth or in Hades; then, with a shriek of horror, he darted forward, and as his hands touched the counter, with a wild leap Hank cleared the bar, over the head of the crouching Tarantula, rushed from the door into the street, beating the air with his arms, and yelling like a fiend, when the spasmodic choking permitted him to do so.

Soon, however, he rolled in the dirt, extinguishing the flame, and, his red face now of a purplish tinge, his muscles twitching, his eyes fixed upon the sky, and to all appearance, lay strangling to death.

CHAPTER VI.

BAD MEDICINE.

WHEN Giant George, Arizona Jack and the females who have been mentioned, left Sardine-box City they passed down toward the canyon, and near to the boulder and mesquite which had been the scene of many a tragic occurrence connected with themselves and the burg.

They also passed the spot where the stage had been left when Lena Reynolds and the giant scout returned from St. Louis, dragged thither by the overjoyed "citz," who had removed the horses from it.

Little did they dream that their benefactress was within the coach, for it was dark; and even

George, in the excitement of the occasion, had been inconsiderate of the peril to which she was thus exposed.

Poor Hank, dead drunk on the coach-top, keeping the scout's burro, Don Diablo, company; and Marm Holbrook, who had been thrown inside by the "citz"—all were captured by Apaches, while their defenders were investigating the cause of a fire in the town, which had been kindled by the Indians.

Past these spots the party now rode, but they were watched by eager eyes as they descended into the canyon by a difficult and winding path.

Amid the cedars, seated upon his horse, was a most ruffianly-looking man; his bloodshot eyes, unkempt hair and beard, and ragged buckskins, proving him to be a wanderer of the mountains.

He was armed to the teeth, and no sooner had the party led by Giant George started up the canyon, than he rode to the opposite side of the thicket, and taking a red kerchief from his pocket, he waved it about his head, toward the range.

Afar up the mountain, a similar signal was soon displayed in answer, from a fissure in the rock; then, a moment after, a flutter of red from the very summit of the range was, for a moment, visible.

The spy waited a reasonable time, and then spurred his horse boldly down into the canyon, following the party of scouts and women; but keeping at a safe distance in the rear.

When the gulch, into which our friends had passed, was reached, the ruffianly-looking spy kept on up the canyon for some little distance, until a wash-out was reached, that led toward the range.

Up this he proceeded hastily, soon coming to a point where he was enabled to spring from the gully to the surface ground; which, at the foot of the range, was boulder strewn and interspersed with clumps of cedars. Cautiously he proceeded until near to Dead Man's Gulch, reaching the pine *motte* which has been described.

Here he dismounted quickly, and entering a thicket led from it a horse fully equipped for the trail; and upon the saddle of which he bound securely a stone of a hundred pounds in weight, or more.

This done, he remounted, and leading the horse he had taken from the thicket, he drove spurs, and sped back to the same wash-out up which he had so recently made his way from the canyon.

Reaching this, he urged the horses at head-long speed toward the north, and away from Sardine-box City and Dead Man's Gulch.

Fifteen minutes perhaps before Lena Reynolds entered the gulch, two rough and desperate-looking men clambered down the northwest side of the basin, and entered the *motte*; keeping close to the side of the cliff and concealing themselves within ten paces of the two graves.

"Reckon we're jist 'bout on time, Jim," said one to the other, in a hoarse whisper. "Hyer, take a fresh drink, fer thet rock-climbin' air calkerlated ter take ther vim outen a pilgrim."

"I doesn't never take a back seat when liquids is a-flowin', Bud; so I'll take a snifter fer luck. But we must go light, fer this air pokerish biz we're on. Cap' Black showed yer a heap o' favor ter slip out a bottle o' p'ison this mornin'."

As Jim spoke, he raised the flask that had been passed him, took a long pull at it, and returned it to his companion, who also imbibed.

Both men were rough in appearance, and their desperate and hunted look attested their character.

They were undoubtedly outlaws, and had, judging from their look and manner, long led the lives of border bandits.

"What makes yer think this air risky biz, Jim?"

"I doesn't think so—I knows hit. I hain't bin in Arizona, knockin' roun' 'mong ther rocks fer a year, not ter know all 'bout Giant George. He's a double bar'l'd bellyun, an' steel ain't made ter slash him, nor ball ter bore him."

"Hit's a dang'd good thing ther 'Paches didn't cut ther wind offen ther woman we're arter, Jim; er we'd 'a' lost this hyer job, an' we needs 'dust' more'n ever afore, since we gut cut up so dang'd bad Tucson-way. Giant George be dang'd! Reckon I kin fotch him wi' my shooter, ef he gits too rambunctious."

"Es fer thet Carlos La Grange, what air so anxious ter cut ther Angel's throat, I reckon we'll iay fer him, an' cut his'n afore he gits clear o' ther range; fer he must hev ther 'rocks,' er he c'udn't cut sich a splurge."

"Dang'd ef I ain't in wi' yer on thet job, pard Bud! He's ther meanest cuss ever struck Arizona, an' orter be wiped out fer bein' sich a dang'd coward thet he can't do his own dirty work."

"But what makes ther citz o' Sardine-box call this hyer woman ther Angel, I'd like ter know?"

"She war ther fust purty gal what ever struck ther burg, an' turned things inside out, when she sot Giant George an' ther citz on ther Panthers, thet hed bored her brother in this hyer very basin."

"Then she shoved 'dust' ter feed ther citz, when nuggets war sca'ce; an' now she hes fotch'd a mill an' furniss, ter run ther Slip up Mine; but, ef ther orders o' Cap' Black air kerried out ter-night, ther mersheenry won't be wo'th shucks."

"'Cordin' ter 'greement 'tween Cap' Black an' this hyer Carlos La Grange, ther burg air ter be bu'sted all up, 'cos they is friends ter ther Angel."

"Carlos sw'ars they must go under, but ther dang'd or'nary gerloot c'udn't buck ag'in' a jack-rabbit hisself!"

"Hit's poor biz, an' I hates ter hurt a woman, pard; speshly when we knows she is a fa'r, squar' gal. I doesn't blame her fer goin' fer them what killed her brother. Howsomever, we-'uns hain't no use fer them kind o' feelin's, when 'dust' air t'other side ther balance."

At this moment, Bud grasped the arm of the speaker, and leani g forward, peered through the foliage.

Both men distinctly heard the sound of hoofs on the rock floor of the basin, approaching from the direction of the gulch.

"Now, Jim," said Bud, as he cocked his revolver; "if Giant George air with her, blaze inter him when I gives ther sign. I ain't a-goin' ter be beat by ther big cuss on this deal no sort o' how."

"I'm ready ter play pards wi' yer on ther shoot, Bud, ef ther cuss runs his nose this-aways."

The sound of hoofs drew nearer and nearer to the *motte*.

"Soon es she comes in, we-'uns must gobble her, an' git, without 'lowin' her ter spit out a yelp. Ef she does, ther big scout 'll gi'n us a hefty tussle, an' mebbe so wipe us out."

"Ye'r' right, Bud; but ef John manages ter lead him on ther false trail, es hes bin 'ranged, we kin make our way ter ther cave es easy es rollin' off a log. All we wants is a half-hour, an' we'll leave nary show o' trail arter us."

Just then the horses seemed to have come to a halt on the verge of the *motte*; and the next moment the black-robed figure of Lena Reynolds entered the clear space near to the grave of her brother.

At sight of this unexpected vision, so far removed in appearance from an ordinary woman, Bud and Jim gazed into each other's eyes in superstitious wonder, each clutching tightly the arm of the other.

For quite a minute they crouched thus; then Bud, throwing off as much as possible the singular feelings that the sight of the pale woman in black had produced, took a pull from his whisky-flask, and passed it over to Jim, who also drank deeply; then, by silent gestures to the latter to follow him, stealthily crept to the rear of the figure, now prostrate upon the grave.

Springing forward quickly, a gag was thrust into her mouth, and she was raised from the earth.

They had no resistance to subdue, however. No bonds were needed to secure their frail captive; for the sudden shock had overpowered her weary brain, and she lay senseless in the arms of Bud.

In five minutes, both men, with their black-robed burden, were hurrying toward the heart of the range, leaving neither trace nor trail, to show to those who had loved her as their own lives, where the Angel of the Range had been taken.

No human beings had ever been known to pitch tent or encamp in the barren spot on the opposite side of the range. Not even the fierce Apache, when not hunted had ever been known to retreat to the spot where Bud and Jim hurried with their captive.

Naught but rough, broken rocks, hemmed in by adamantine walls that towered skyward, rent by deep fissures, with here and there a jutting crag avoided even by the "big horn," that found no browsing-place except upon the opposite side of the range; such was the spot to which the two outlaws now hastened; and the secret of their knowledge of the place was soon

revealed. For, at a low whistle from Bud, an Indian, of a most repulsive and murderous look, sprung with a loud "Waugh" from a rocky cleft, and confronted them.

His long black hair was thrust back from his forehead, and a dirty red kerchief, bound tightly, held the same in place.

A short bow and a quiver of arrows were held at his back by a strip of beaded buckskin.

A more fiendish-looking human being could not be produced; and his character was probably more fiendish than his appearance.

His make of arms and general build proclaimed him an Apache—probably a renegade from his tribe.

"Good boy, Satan!" said Bud, with relief. "Lead on ter ther hole; fer I sw'ar I doesn't b'lieve I c'u'd find hit ef I hunted a month o' Sundays."

"Jim, take her! I swan ter cristy, I'm plum broke up comin' through ther rocks."

The Indian stood in his tracks; a look of wonder upon his hideous face, striped as it was with parallel streaks of gypsum and vermillion.

"I'll take her, Bud," said Jim, reluctantly; "but I'll own thet I never 'spects ter hev another streak o' luck arter this hyer scrape. I wish't I hedn't 'a' gone inter hit. Ef I doesn't lay fer thet States cuss what sot us onto hit, I hopes ter never slash another mail-bag!"

With these words, Jim took Lena in his arms, she being still unconscious, and Bud shook himself, as if with great relief. He then refreshed himself with another glass of whisky, giving the flask, when he had done so, to the Indian. The terrible countenance of the latter contorted into an approach to a smile as he received it, and raised it to his throat.

The Apache then pointed to the captive, saying:

"Heap bad medicine!"

"Dang'd ef yer ain't right, Satan. But lead on; we want to get her off our hands," said Jim.

The Indian, with a light, springy step, led the outlaws, by many a winding way, amid the bowlders, and along the foot of the range. He then sprung upward for some distance on the mountain side; when, turning an abrupt bend within a winding fissure, they all entered an arched passage, soon emerging into a cave chamber.

From this they passed into another, smaller in extent, the floor of which was covered with robes; a couch, rough benches and tables being scattered here and there about the apartment.

As they entered, Jim placed the still insensible form of their unhappy captive upon the couch, and the same instant, a young man of dissipated appearance, with a flushed face and flashy attire, reeled into the cave-chamber, and gave a yell of mingled exultation, relief and triumph, as he recognized Lena Reynolds.

Staggering into the middle of the apartment, after one glance at the face of Lena, he thrust his hands into his pockets, jerked them forth full of gold eagles, and threw them high in the air toward Jim, Bud, and the Indian.

Then, giving another yell, he strove for a moment to keep his standing position, staggering right and left, back and forth, but in vain.

The next moment he fell prostrate upon the floor, and there lay in drunken insensibility.

Again the Indian's arm was raised, his finger pointing first at the prostrate man, and then at the Angel of the Range, as he uttered, in a significant manner:

"Heap bad medicine!"

CHAPTER VII.

BECOMING CONVIVIAL.

THE "Terrantaler o' Taos" was forced to thrust the brim of his sombrero into his mouth to smother the laughter that convulsed his burly frame, as the landlord of the "Nugget" went flying over the bar, and over himself as he lay crouched on the floor.

When the victim of his cowardly and dangerous practical joke landed in the street, however, and rolled in the dirt, and the Tarantula began to realize that the shrieks of Hank could be heard from afar, he ran quickly out, grasped his victim in his arms, returned, and seated him on the end of the counter, leaning him against the front slabs of the room.

This done, he caught up a decanter and glass, and administered a large dose of whisky to his patient; whose eyes, now rolling wildly about, showed plainly the agony and fright he had suffered.

The gigantic rough of the border had taken the precaution to stand upon the cork in the street, it having become detached from the

landlord's nose in his struggles with the ball of tobacco in his mouth.

The whisky, however, seemed to act as an antidote; and gradually the little red-faced man became more composed and natural.

He strove to speak, but only a gurgling and rattling in his throat, and a spasmodic contraction of his face was the result of the attempt.

"Dang my cast-iron heart!" said the Tarantula, assuming an air of sympathy and pity, which was ludicrous in the extreme. "What's ther matter wi' yer, pard? Does yer git sich fits often? Ef yer does, I'd 'vise yer ter hev somebody roun' ter take keer o' yer. Ef I hedn't 'a' glided this-a-way, yer'd made a clean jump inter kingdom come, without makin' yer will, er sayin' 'so-long' ter yer frien's."

"Hit seems ter me thet ye'r' a ormighty small specimen of a human ter run a burg o' ther size o' Sardine-box City all erlone. Whar in thunderation air ther 'citz' o' this one-hoss locate?"

"Howsomever, I kin wait fer an explain ontil yer annertommercal 'rangements gits back ter nat'ral biz. Don't wag yer tongue ontil yer heart begins ter go pitty-pat, like a cat lappin' milk."

"Less take a snifter tergether, fer I reckon hit's your treat; an' I feels kinder choky, es though I hed rid all day over a alkerli plain."

Pouring out two glasses of whisky, the "Terrantaler" placed one in the trembling hand of the landlord, and grasping the other, they clicked crystals, and drank with evident satisfaction.

The landlord took a second drink, and then leaned forward, and threw his legs over the counter, bracing himself with both hands upon it; meanwhile gazing in a perplexed manner at the man before him, whom he did not remember ever having seen before.

"Doesn't s'pose yer ever fixed yer peepers onter my 'Pollo-like 'natermy afore," said the Tarantula, straightening himself proudly.

"Howsomever, I'm ther pilgrim thet kin spit out your cog 'thout scratchin' my brain-box. Ye'r' knowed es a purty squar' sort o' a whisk-slinger, up an' down range, 'mong ther boyees; an' ef I ain't mistook, ye'r' Hank Holbrook!"

The little black eyes of the landlord expressed surprise and pleasure, as he extended his hand, which was grasped quickly by his guest, and so violently shaken that he was jerked from the counter to the floor; a grimace of pain contorting his red and bloated features, as he cried out:

"Hold on, stranger! Dang my cats, ef yer hes gut a iron heart, I wants yer ter undercomstan' thet my hand air simon-pure meat an' bone an' bleed; 'sides I doesn't keer ter be shoved roun' much, fer I'm shaky jist now. My pegs is all loose, an' I'm not jist squar' in my thinkin'-box."

"Whar in thunderation did yer come from, an' what's bin ther difficult wi' me? Dang'd ef I didn't go ter sleep, an' wake up whar I c'u'd take a double-bar'led afferdavy thet I smelled brimstone an' see'd ther blaze. What war I a-doin' when yer fust 'roved in this hyer burg?"

"Yer war a-tryin' ormighty hard ter dig yer own grave, out in ther street yunder," answered the Tarantula, with a loud laugh. "I'll sw'ar I never see'd a human scratch gravel livelier. Hit war es good es a circus—dang'd ef hit warn't! Reckon heart disease er 'perplexity must run in yer famerly, doesn't hit?"

"Nary a apperplex," said Hank. "I reckon hit's a leetle tew hefty a surp'y o' whisk' thet run down my errigatin' pipe. I'm a ole fool, and I hes come dang'd nigh skippin' over ther divide. Fact air, I war borned dry, an' I never knows when I hes got 'nough down. I hes often tuck a piece o' chalk an' marked every drink on a slab, jist ter see 'bout how many I could chamber, an' not wilt. But hit wouldn't work. When I come roun' ter biz, arter purty nigh turnin' up toes, ther hull side o' ther bar war kivered wi' chalk marks, which showed thet toward ther eend I must ha' bin sockin' down 'bout a hundred marks fer one drink, an' tryin' ter fool myself."

"But Marm Holbrook, thet's my ole woman, she sw'ars I tuck ther hull number, an' more tew; fer she see'd me skip sottin' down a hefty lot o' drinks."

"Stranger, I can't help hit—'speshly when I'm erlone. I opened ther Nugget fer biz, an' lively biz et thet, an' when thar ain't no pilgrims a-yellin' fer errigates, I hes ter keep things a-movin' by pourin' down p'ison myself."

"I'm ormighty glad yer drap'd in. We'll hev somethin' ag'in. I b'lieve yer jarked me outen the clutch o' ther devil hisself, what war a-

holdin' me et ther door o' Tophet, ready ter chuck me in!

"What's yer cog, stranger! Whar did yer 'rove from? An' whar air yer a-p'intin'?"

"Don't ax tew many questions ter one't! Hit kind'er flusterates me. Sling out some pure quill, an' I'll interduck myself arterwards. I'm dang'd ef I ever war so cussed dry afore."

Hank walked around the end of the bar and quickly "set 'em up," his face now beaming with evident pleasure and great relief at having escaped the clutches of the Evil One, as well as from having an arrival who seemed able and anxious to drink as often as his own appetite called for stimulants.

"Hyer's ter ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

So sung out Hank, in a shrill, piping voice, as he thrust his glass against that of the Tarantula.

"Dang'd ef I hain't hearn tell o' her. Hyer goes!"

Thus spoke the giant. He then drank and replaced his glass upon the counter. Both men now stood looking at each other, each trying to read the other's character and both beginning to feel the effect of the fiery liquor, an unusual quantity of which had been drunk in a very short time.

"Now," said the giant, as he drew his sleeve across his bearded lips, "now I'll interduck myself. I'm a cellerbrated border hero, I am. I come from up range, an' I'm p'it ted down funder ef this hyer burg don't pan out ter suit me."

"I'm a high-fly promernader o' ther perrarers an' meanderer o' ther mountings. I takes my see-estars on ther peaks, 'bove ther flip-flap of a buzzard's wing. I'm a roarin' rager an' a terror when I gits on a jim-jam glide an' hes ther contract for startin' stiff-yards fer every burg what's slapped up on ther range."

"Jist listen ter ther ding-dong o' my iron heart. I'm ther Terrantaler o' Taos, a terror ter tender-buffs, a bad bird on buff'ler, and a perforator o' pilgrims that peramberlates over my pertater-patch."

"I'm ther Terrantaler what never lost a leg. My breath air p'ison, an' I war hatched with a full set o' grinders, thet kin crunch up quartz es speedy an' es fine es any mersheen on ther range. When I strike a pay lead I doesn't hev ter lay roun' fer capital ter start biz, but I goes right straight ter chawin' an' shippin' ore."

"I pards wi' nobuddy 'ceptin' when I'm floatin' 'bout arter fluids. Thet 'minds me—Hank, slide 'em out ag'in! Hit's my treat, an' thar's ther valler rocks ter liquerate fer ther lightnin' liquid."

"Whoop-er-up! Whoop-er-e-e-e!"

"Hyer I air! Gaze et me! Hyar's ther Terrantaler o' Taos on a jim-jamboree!"

As the bully rattled off this extravagant harangue, at times bringing his huge fist down on the bar with a slam that caused the decanters on the shelf beyond to tremble, as well as the nervous landlord, the bead-like eyes of the latter expressed much astonishment and admiration, mingled with no little apprehension.

This highly gratified the braggart and caused him to "cotton" to Hank, who, if he had any doubts in regard to his guest being a "great border hero," had them soon dispelled by the display of a handful of twenty-dollar gold pieces, which the giant slapped down ostentatiously on the bar.

"Dang'd ef I ain't ormighty tickled ter hev yer run in on us," said Hank with emphasis, as he again extended his hand for a fresh shake.

"I do sn't jist now reckermember o' hearin' tell on yer, though I s'pose I hes. Yer see I'm purty well broke up, from bein' tuck by ther cussed 'Paches, an' my reg'lar whisk' cut off. Ef hit hadn't 'a' bin fer Giant George I'd 'a' bin tortur'd, an' so would my ole woman."

"Thet makes me think thet ye'r' 'bout ther same heft an' hight es George. Yer'd make a tough ole pa'r o' pards fer a big party ter buck ag'in' ef yer'd both git started tergether."

"Reckon yer knows George—ther Bald Headed Eagle o' ther Rockies—everybuddy purty nigh, down an' up range, knows him."

"Ya-as, I hes heerd o' him," said the bully, his face suddenly expressing anxiety. "Reckon he ain't 'bout these diggins now, air he?"

"He's up et Dead Man's Gulch, wi' Arizone Jack, an' ther Angel, an' some other kaliker-kivered humans; but I'm 'spectin' 'em ter-night. I'll interduck yer when he 'roves."

"Dang my iron heart!" said the Tarantula; "hit's lucky thet I skuted this-a-way from Chico City, whar I hed bin runnin' ther burg fer awhile. I'm glad ter git a show ter run ag'in' thet Giant George."

Although the braggart thus spoke, he re-

solved to "skip the town" before the arrival of the celebrated scout, who well knew his character and history.

But the liquor had, to a certain extent, blunted his judgment, and also his dread of meeting George, or he would have left Sardine-box City without delay.

"Whar in thunderation air ther citz o' this here burg?" he asked, as they again clicked glasses. "I thought, dead sure, when I just roved, ther town hed bu'sted."

"Dang my thick head! I orter 'a' tole yer afore," said Hank. "Yer see, ther Slip-up Mine hain't never bin wo'th a tinker's cuss, since ther shaf' war sunk, because thar warn't dust enough in ther hull burg ter pay fer a crusher, an' furnisses, an' sich. We 'uns war nigh bu'sted—bet yer life!"

"But Giant George an' ther Angel 'roved jist in time ter save us an' ther burg, fer they brunged 'long all ther mersheenery fer ther Slip up. Thet air three days back, an' ther hull burg hes bin on a jim-jamboree ever since; this sun-up bein' ther fust time anybuddy c'u'd git down ter any sense."

"They hes all gone now ter unload ther wagons, takin' a John-demy o' whisk' 'long ter lubercate thar in'ards, an' keep snakes from hatchin' in thar butes."

Thus did the Tarantula and Hank Holbrook converse—one or the other treating every few minutes, until both were prostrated. Then the giant crawled in behind the bar, and clasping Hank in his arms, the two fell together into a deathlike slumber upon the floor.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXCITEMENT AMONG THE "CITZ."

THE Slip-up Mine, as has been mentioned, was about half a mile from the street of Sardine-box City, and the discovery of the vein of gold-bearing quartz alone had prevented the depopulation of the little town.

Some of the citizens had also been fortunate in their search for "pocket" deposits, but they dared not venture, for fear of the marauding Apaches.

These, although prevented from leaving the burg, had no great inclination to do so, as, from frequent battling against common dangers and privations, they had become, so to speak, one family.

Lena Reynolds had, by her generosity, enabled the "citz" to hold together; for, previous to her departure from the place after her marriage with Mr. Reynolds, she had supplied them with liberal donations from the treasure left by her murdered brother.

All had been equally anxious to serve and save her from the power of the bandits, and some had lost their lives in her rescue. She had, therefore, enjoined upon those whom she left behind when she returned to the "States," that they should hold together until she should be able to develop the Slip up Mine.

Matters being in this condition, it was no wonder that when Giant George returned, all, supposing that he had brought news of the mill and furnaces, went wild with joy. Nor, that they also went wild with grief, when they learned that their benefactress had been in the coach which they had drawn down to the canyon, and which had been rifled by the Apaches.

No men were ever more desperately determined to battle to the death than the "citz," when they started on the rescue. In this they had succeeded but four days previous to the opening of this narrative—as has been told in "Arizona Jack," Half Dime Library No. 275.

The arrival of the wagon-train, with the long-coveted furnaces and mill, which promised prosperity to all, had caused the "citz," as Hank Holbrook expressed it, "ter b'ile over wi' pure glad an' ter cellerbrate by gittin' drunk es b'iled owls."

This celebration had lasted three days and nights, during which Sardine-box City had been turned into a pandemonium. The women had taken up their quarters at the boulder near the canyon during this time on a picnic by themselves, having been drawn there in a wagon, fully provisioned, Marm Holbrook taking charge of the culinary department.

Upon the fourth morning, however—which was the commencement of our tale—the wagons had hitched up, and with feeble cheers, for all had yelled themselves hoarse, the train proceeded to the Slip-up Mine, at the foot of the range, with great difficulty, much labor being required to clear the way.

It was in the middle of the forenoon when the wagons reached the point where the various

machinery was to be unloaded at the mouth of a shaft which had been excavated by most laborious hand-drilling and blasting.

The course traveled led up a wild gorge, its sides rough and broken; the same making an abrupt bend at the foot of the mountains, forming a huge basin, the shaft being on the north side, and at the very base of the towering ridge.

The sides of this huge natural excavation were fifty feet high, at all points except at the opening at the west, and the mountain side; all being rough, craggy and broken, and almost inaccessible, to ascend or descend, being at the risk of limb, if not of life.

The bed of the basin was comparatively level, and of not more than a half acre in extent.

Here a busy scene was presented when the train arrived; the wagons being left as far as possible from each other, and the oxen detached, and allowed to roam, still in yoke, down the gorge.

There were some thirty red and blue shirted miners, all told; each armed, and wearing the inevitable wide-brimmed sombrero of the Southwest. Their faces were as joyous as those of any crowd of men ever congregated together; for Tom Jones, the sheriff of Sardine-box City, and superintendent of the mine, as well as general leader in every thing at the burg, had called all hands, at what he deemed the proper time, and dealt out a reasonable amount of whisky to each. This, he thought was necessary to counteract the demoralizing of their stomachs, consequent upon the indulgence of the three days previous.

When the oxen were clear of the basin, all set at work with a will to unload and place in secure positions the various castings and machinery for the working of the mine; and as no sheds had as yet been built, under which these valuables could be placed, the tilts of the wagons were removed, and placed over each load, to protect them from the dew of the coming night—the intention being to erect sheds on the following day.

The "citz" had passed so many trials, hardships, actual want, and deadly danger from Indians and outlaws since the settlement of the town—battling successfully with all, and having only a few days before almost annihilated the band of Apaches under the celebrated chief El Orso, that they dreamed not of any present danger—in fact, it seemed impossible that anything could now occur to mar their present security. Both outlaws and Indians had been, as Tom Jones expressed it, "wiped out slick and clean."

Not that they supposed they would be exempt from danger in the days to come; for Arizona swarmed with hostile bands of red-men, and almost as desperate and merciless white outlaws. But disaster and danger had so long been their portion—they having been almost continuously fighting against both, they imagined now that they had banished all—and, to crown everything, the "Angel" of the burg was with them, and had brought with her all that they had hoped and longed for.

They were, therefore, certainly justified in supposing that they would, for a time at least, be free from all outside hostile interference, and could go on uninterrupted with the one grand object of their ambition; to wit, the rigging up into working order of the Slip-up mine.

The old name still clung to the shaft, regardless of all attempts to call it otherwise.

And such was the general state of feeling.

It was almost night when the last wagon was stripped of tilt and the unlading of the same commenced, Tom Jones yelling in a cheery voice as the work went on:

"Whoop-er-up, boyees! We'll soon hev this hyer schooner stripped, an' then we'll empty ther John-demy, an' glide fer ther Nugget ter raise a leetle rumpus with Giant George; fer I reckon he's got back from Dead Man's Gulch by this."

A faint cheer arose at this from the weary miners. They set to work with a will; but, in a few moments, all stopped at once, sprung erect and gazed open-mouthed toward the entrance of the basin—their faces expressing the utmost amazement and apprehension.

"Dog my cats!" exclaimed the sheriff, in the most intense surprise, "what ther dickens air up down ther gulch!"

And well might he ask the question, although the next instant he interpreted the sounds aright, as did they all, and sprung into the wagons for safety.

An indescribable dip now filled the air, the oxen, with their yokes still upon them, rushing into the opening in a wild stampede.

"Jump, boyees! Run fer ther rocks, er we're mashed to jelly! Run fer yer lives!"

Thus yelled Tom Jones, and his order was quickly obeyed; indeed, many realized the danger before he spoke. But before the mass of flying miners had crossed half the distance between the wagons and the base of the mountain that promised them safety, the crack of rifles sounded in their ears, and four of their number fell, with loud cries of agony, in their tracks.

All now halted, in a dazed condition, but the overwhelming mass of maddened brutes in their rear, caused them to dash onward and leave their fallen comrades to their fate.

On dashed the avalanche of terrified beasts, surging against each other, and allowing no hesitation in front; grinding as they went, the miners who had been shot, from all semblance of humanity.

As Tom Jones and the "citz" stood behind huge boulders near the shaft, speechless with horror, again rung the sharp crack of rifles from some unseen marksmen, echoing from cleft to cleft, and from crag to crag, and three more hardy sons of the mountains threw up their arms, and sunk with heavy groans upon the rocks.

"Come on, boyees!" cried Tom. "Git fer ther shaft! Ther cussed cowards hes ther dead-wood on us hyer, whoever they bees. May I never meet my ole marm over ther divide, ef I doesn't hunt ther bellyuns what shot our pards. I'll hunt 'em ter ther eend o' this hyer yearth!"

Horried and mystified beyond expression, unable to articulate a word in the dread that ruled them, the crowd of miners hastily sprang for the shaft of the Slip up, and gained a position of safety, just as the stampeding oxen rushed back, down the gorge, striving in frenzied efforts to drag along with them their maimed mates, unable to walk or stand, and that were still yoked to them.

For fully half an hour, Tom Jones and the "citz" remained in the shaft, until the shadows of night enveloped the basin; none, not even the sheriff, being able to understand the origin of this new and terrible calamity that had fallen upon them.

The character and color of the mysterious marksmen, it was beyond their comprehension to decide; but there were none who did not register a terrible and binding oath, to trace out the cowardly assassins, hunt them to the earth, and consign them to a fearful and ignominious death.

But, as the shades of night fell all became impatient, and Tom Jones led the way out from the basin and down the gulch.

No thought now of the Slip-up Mine.

No thought of the furnaces and other machinery, now doubtless broken and worthless, by the hoofs of the maddened animals.

No thought of gold or gain, of hunger or rest—naught but revenge stirred the souls of the surviving miners.

"Come on, boyees!" again yelled Tom Jones. "Come on! ther bellyuns gut ther dead-wood on us, but we'll kerral'em yit. Come on fer ther burg, an' our rifles!"

CHAPTER IX.

MARM HOLBROOK'S DISCOVERY.

THE landlady of the Nugget Hotel was a short, rather fleshy woman, with a pleasant, motherly face, and the very picture of health. She was of about the same height and build as her husband; but the ruddy hue of her cheeks was owing to a superabundance of blood, and to passing much of her time over her cooking-stove, and not from indulgence in intoxicants, as was the case with her helpmate.

She was the mother of the burg; being, as Hank proudly expressed it "ther fust female women that ever struck ther locate."

She had a habit of smoothing her hair, first with the palm of one hand and then with that of the other, while in conversation. This seemed to assist her in expressing herself; as did also a frequent smoothing out of the kinks in her calico apron, a vestment which extended to within a couple of inches of the terminus of her skirt.

This garment was exchanged for a spotless white one, with a linen collar about her neck, when kitchen duties were through with for the day.

Marm Holbrook was a pleasant body to look upon, and reminded many a young miner of his mother, far away on the old farm in the "States."

It was several hours previous to the entree of the "Terrantaler o' Taos" into Sardine-box City, and but a short time after the departure of Giant George, Arizona Jack, and the women,

to visit the grave of Sam Lawrence at Dead Man's Gulch, that the good landlady put the finishing touches to her kitchen work, and was about to ascend the stairs, and tidy up the apartments of her female guests; especially the one occupied by Lena, and which she called her "bestest room."

Never had Marm Holbrook been happier, and more contented with her lot on the wild border, than since her rescue from the Apaches. Her joy originated as much from having again met with Lena Reynolds, as from her rescue.

The worthy hostess looked with veneration upon every thing that belonged to Lena; and the chamber of "ther Angel" she considered a consecrated room.

Not once since the return of Mrs. Reynolds had Marm Holbrook pestered Hank in regard to "levanting back Texas-way," as had been her wont; for the company of the "Angel" was all that was necessary to make the world seem bright to the motherly and simple-minded woman. And this, although they were in a portion of the world that was filled with deadly perils, and far from being a Paradise.

Marm Holbrook and Lena Reynolds were the women of all women to the "citz" of the burg, and were closely connected with the history of the town.

As a matter of course, the good hostess had been worried somewhat by the fact that her husband had indulged too deeply in his usual potations since the return of Giant George and Lena; but, as the whole burg had been "rarin', tearin' drunk" at the flattering prospects ahead, she had refrained from her usual lengthy and emphatic temperance lectures, which, by the way, had never seemed to influence Hank to reduce in the least the number of his drinks.

Neither had his numerous attacks of mania, from the unlimited use of his favorite beverage seemed to prove a lesson to him; for he rushed madly back to drink, as soon as he had partially recovered from the dread consequences of "snakes bein' hatched in his boots."

Hank was, his wife decided, too far gone to expect him ever to reform; and she often became discouraged, and believed it might be as well to allow him to drink the thing out, and be done with it, for he would be no worse off dead than alive.

However, she had registered a vow that Hank should "go easy on whisk" while Lena Reynolds was a guest at the Nugget.

As we have said Marm Holbrook was through with her kitchen-work, and taking a look around her neatly arranged culinary department with much satisfaction, she stepped quickly to the bar-room door, and opened it slowly, resolved to ascertain the cause of the silence that now reigned there.

Not a soul was to be seen in the room; but a familiar swine-like snoring indicated the presence of her better-half behind the bar; and she advanced to the end of the counter, and peering around it, discovered Hank in the same condition as the Tarantula had found him.

Shaking her fist at the sleeping man, she muttered:

"Dog-gone yer, Hank Holbrook! Yer leetle, sneakin', insignifercant, puserlanimous, good-fer-nothin' whisk-sucker! I must say, though I'm a meetin'-house woman, an' should love my enemies, I must say that I e'ena'most hate yer. Yer hes dragged me clean from Texas-way, which war hitself a tough hole ter locate inter, ter ther foot-hills an' bowlders o' ther Rocky Mountains; an' now ye're a-pourin' all our wealth down yer throat. When yer skips outen this world, hit'll be a lively time; an' ef I ain't much mistook, yer'll help ter make ther music."

"Yer'll linger here-a-ways though, I reckon, until all ther p'ison air gone, an' thar won't be enough left in ther Nugget ter pay fer a pa'r o' bulls an' a Mex' cart, fer me ter levant with back Texas-way."

"Howsomever, thar's one conserlation, er I know I sh'd go plum crazy; an' thet air ther Angel. She won't see Marm Holbrook want fer nothin', long es she hangs out in this triberlous world."

"Hit's mighty strange yer kin spar' ther time ter sleep; but I'm a-bettin' yer'll make up fer hit by pourin' down 'bout a pint when yer opens yer peepers."

"Yer looks like a b'iled lobster, though I hain't see'd one since I war a gal. So long! Yer or'nary whisk' bloat; hit 'ud 'a' bin a good thing fer all consarned ef ther 'Paches hed skinned yer head!"

"With these words, her features expressing extreme disgust, Marm Holbrook left the bar-room, slowly keeping step with Hank's snore, and mounted the stairs to the "bestest room."

So infuriated was the excellent landlady at finding her better-half in such a beastly state, after he had solemnly sworn that he would "taper off outen respect ter ther Angel o' Pen-arlayno Range," that she kept on in her duties, still muttering to herself, and heard nothing of the entrance of the Tarantula. The first thing that startled her from her reverie was an unearthly yell from Hank, as the ball of tobacco rolled down his throat, and the flames and fumes of brimstone filled him with dread and horror.

With her eyes fixed toward the stairway, as if expecting some fearful vision to meet her view, the landlady stood for a moment; then, as the yells came, as she knew, from the street, she again gave vent to her anger.

"Dog gone hit! No, dang hit! I will sw'ar—I doesn't keer ef I am a meetin'-house woman—I sw'ar, an' I mean hit—a big double-bar'l'd sw'ar tool ther ain't no female woman what never skipped a Sunday gatherin' nor a camp-meetin' what kin stand no sich without repeatin' ther hull o' her pra's back'ard."

"But I clean fergut ther Angel. I b'lieve she kin do hit; but then, she ain't hitched fer life ter a bar'l of bug juice! Thet dod-blasted Hank hev gut 'em ag'in, sure an' sartin'; an' thar's nobuddy hyer ter kerral him an' tie him down."

Stepping to the window, Marm Holbrook gazed out and below, discovering Hank rolling in the street, and tearing at the earth, as if in a terrible fit.

Back she dashed, and threw herself on "ther bestest bed," covering her face with her hands, in hopeless agony.

"Jist es I s'posed," she groaned; "Hank's gut 'em ag'in! He must be a iron man ter hev had 'em so many times, an' still linger in Arizone. Hit makes me es sick es a yaller dog ter look et him."

"Ef he starts ter come up ther sta'rs, I'll hove ther hull o' ther furnitur' down on him, 'ceptin' what's in ther bestest room. Oh, my! Oh! Lordy me! Ef ther Angel sh'd 'rove back now, an' see him, I sh'd faint dead away, outen pure shame!"

Thus, for a long time, lay Marm Holbrook, her head covered, and hearing nothing of the conversation that ensued between Hank and the Tarantula.

At last, the utter deathlike stillness, so unusual in the Nugget, again alarmed Marm Holbrook, and she sprung to her feet, lis ening intently.

"Dang'd ef he ain't gone dead this trip, sure an' sartin'!" she said to herself, in a hoarse whisper.

"I do declar' I shill faint! I shill die hyer, all erlone—I'm dead sure on hit, fer I can't breathe nat'ral. I jist know Hank wouldn't shet his yell-trap ef he hed any life left. I wished I hed gone with ther Angel, an' George, an' t'others, ef I did hev ter meander 'mong ther bowlders an' sich—dang my back ha'r ef I doesn't!"

"Jist ter think thet Hank air layin' down thar, stiff es a cart-tongue; to s' turned up, an' ready ter plant! I swan I can't b'ar it!"

"He war a good-hearted soul anyway, an' always war easy-like wi' me, though I did r'ar up, an' b'ile over purty often, an' sling some purty peppery 'Nited States et him. Hevins an' arth! How'll I git erlong without him? I shill die—I know I shill—an' whar'll I go tew when I dew? Not hev'n bin inside o' a meetin'-house in a hefty run of moons, I really doesn't b'lieve I kin say over ther shortest hymn I ever l'arned, an' I ain't a-goin' ter try; fer ef I can't hit'll work me up a heap more. I'm a quiverin' all over, an' I'll hev a conniption fit, ef I lingers hyer. Hit's wuss ter think than ter see; so I'll glide down an' 'vestergate ef hit kills me!"

Silently Marm Holbrook stole across the room, and descended the stairs as if treading upon eggs, every creak of the boards causing her to tremble.

Cautiously she opened the bar-room door, her eyes bulging, expecting some horrible sight to burst into view, but not a human being, dead or alive, was in sight.

Listening for an instant, her face suddenly changed its expression, great relief, however, merging back into the disgust and indignation that had ruled her on her previous visit to the bar; for a sound struck her ears, unmistakably a snore, or a continuous series of them, so blended together as to sound extremely peculiar.

Stepping with great care, her form half bent forward, Marm Holbrook reached out her hand, and, grasping the end of the counter, drew herself along and peeped behind the bar. To her horror and amazement, she beheld the outstretched form of a gigantic man, with bruised and bloated features that were hideous to look

upon; his clothing torn and soiled, his hair and beard unkempt and tangled.

The eyes of this stranger were closed, his huge mouth was wide open and giving out beastlike snores, and his broad breast was rising and falling spasmodically, as if dread dreams ruled his heavy slumbers.

This picture Marm Holbrook saw, and nothing else, for Hank was shielded from her view by the counter. For an instant the landlady gazed, with mouth agape and eyes staring with astonishment.

Then the Tarantula threw one arm wildly in air, as his dreams became more exciting, and Marm Holbrook gave a piercing shriek and ran as she had never before run, gathering her scanty skirts upward to enable her to bound more rapidly.

Her back hair became freed from its usual prim condition and flew wildly behind, as through the kitchen and out at the door she sped, directly to the stone bake oven in the yard at the door of the Nugget. Into this she launched herself head-foremost and disappeared from view.

Only a few words escaped her lips, in a horrified but half-defiant tone, proving that she felt sure she was pursued by the hideous and gigantic stranger.

"Leave me 'lone, yer long-ha'r'd, mashed-faced, condemned cuss! Yer hes swallered Hank an' half ther whisk' in ther bar; but yer can't gobble me up."

"Leave me 'lone—dod-rot yer! I'm a meet-in'-house woman!"

CHAPTER X.

IN A TRAP.

To describe the anguish of Giant George, as he clutched the pine boughs, and crushed them in his iron grasp, while he stared upon the crumpled grass that grew upon the graves of Sam Lawrence and poor Terrif would be impossible.

Only a few days previous, he had rescued the "Angel" from the clutches of the merciless Apaches; and but a little more than three months before, she had been abducted from this very spot by a gang of outlaws.

El Capitan, her brother's murderer, who had ruined her father, and alienated her lover from her, had sworn to crush her. Through his spies, he had learned of her arrival in Sardine-box City, on a visit to her brother's grave, and with a purpose of avenging him.

This knowledge caused the bandit chief to set a watch on the grave; and while Giant George was within the basin, keeping at a distance out of respect for her grief, she had been spirited away.

He had saved her then, and her long alienated lover had taken a part in the fierce fight, in which El Capitan, otherwise Edward Willoughby was killed.

And now, after all whom she cared for, had been snatched from her by the merciless hand of death, and she had returned to Arizona, to be near her brother's grave, and to befriend those who had fought for her to the death—now that George had brought her back, not dreaming that further danger or trouble could be in her way, she had vanished without a word or cry—stolen from her brother's grave a second time.

Since Lena's rescue from the Apaches, she had never seemed like herself—the hand of death appeared to have been laid upon her.

Her face, so pale yet more beautiful than ever, seemed to speak more of another world than this.

To the giant scout, she always seemed to be different, to be far above other mortals.

Arizona Jack, who had stopped to quiet and reassure Warnitta and Marietta, was dumfounded at their assertion that Lena Reynolds had disappeared. He now entered the *molle*, close followed by the weeping women.

Advancing, and placing a hand upon the shoulder of Giant George, he said, in a low and sympathetic voice:

"Come, pard George! It is no time for meditation. We might as well look facts in the face. It is very evident that misery and danger are plants that thrive wonderfully, and grow thick around Sardine-box City."

"Lena Reynolds was born under an unlucky star—that is evident—but let us hope that we shall be enabled to get her out of this fix, as we did before, when there seemed not the slightest hope."

The giant scout took the hand of Jack, but was unable to articulate a word. He looked, inquiringly, at the weeping women beyond.

"Indeed, Senor George," said Marietta, "we know nothing in regard to our dear Lena."

We stopped at the margin of the pines until we thought she had been long enough by herself; and then we came here, but she was gone. Where can she be?"

Warnitta threw herself upon the ground in prayer.

"Come, come, George, let us get to work. She must be found. Some fiend in human shape has been here. Study the 'sign,' old pard, and we'll follow it up, and neither eat nor sleep until she is safe."

At these words the giant scout straightened himself erect and said in tremulous tones:

"Onc't my faith in ther Lord 'bout gi'n out, when ther 'Paches tuck her; but I 'gins ter think that He ain't 'sponserble fer what humans er onhumans does arter He puts 'em hyer. His ways kinder flusterates me; but I hopes, ef He does control human critters, that He'll keep her from sufferin' an' misery this time."

"I hes tried ter be squar' an' white all erlong, an' I hopes He'll gin me another show ter snatch her from danger an' death."

During these words of Giant George Jack had removed his sombrero and preserved a prayerful mien, while Marietta threw herself upon her knees by her mother. Soon the huge scout's manner changed like a flash of light. A stern, revengeful determination settled upon his face, and every nerve and gesture betrayed the firm resolution and indomitable will for which he was so famed. Giant George was himself again.

Throwing himself upon the grave, at the same time giving a gesture of caution and a silent command by look and wave of hand, that all should remain as they were, he began to examine each imprint and bunch of bruised grass, as well as the disarranged pine needles around the grave, eventually reaching the thick clump where Bud and Jim had lain in wait for their captive.

At once he sprung to his feet, exclaiming:

"Pard Jack, ther hellyuns hes gut her, dead sure an' sartain!"

"White or red?" asked Arizona Jack.

"White faces, but black hearts, an' I tear 'em out, er I'm a liar!"

"What white men can there be around here who would do such a deed?"

"They hesn't been hyer more'n a week, an' I reckon they come from Grandee-ways."

"How in the name of wonder do you ascertain that?"

"They w'ars Mex' shoes," was the laconic reply, as the giant scout proceeded to follow up the trail to the wall of the basin, where all signs ceased.

He then proceeded to ascertain if the abductors had gone west, by examining the ground from the base of the range directly south and toward the canyon.

There he discovered the trail of the two horses, one of which had been ridden by the bandit spy, the other, with the loaded saddle, led by him.

The plain "sign" left in the thicket where the single horse had been secured was also found; but, as this evidence was so conclusive and plain, the scout did not waste time in ascertaining if one, or two animals had been left there—the almost positive supposition being that there had been two, and that Lena had been carried away upon one of them.

Hastily running along the trail for some distance, until it pointed down the wash-out toward the canyon, Giant George bounded back to the basin, on the bank of which stood Arizona Jack.

"Jump yer critter, an' take keer o' ther weemin in ther canyon! Thar's only one hellyun thet's gut ther Angel, an' I kin kerral him, an' save her in an hour."

Thus yelled George, as he ran toward the head of the gulch where the horses had been left, sprung upon his steed, and spurred down the dark depths toward the canyon, regardless of the protestations of Jack, who, much to his chagrin, was forced to remain.

Hastily placing the weeping women upon their horses, and leading the animal of Lena Reynolds, Jack rode on to the canyon, determined to guard and guide Warnitta and Marietta to within a safe distance of Sardine-box City, and then return and overtake his pard.

The latter dashed up the canyon at headlong speed, alone; soon reaching the point where the wash-out entered the same. Here he discovered the trail of the two horses, which led up the vast chasm toward the northwest; the point at which, four days previous, he and the "citz" had engaged in a fierce fight with the Apaches, and saved Lena and Marietta from a fate far worse than death.

On dashed the giant scout, his eagle glance bent ahead; now and then gazing downward along the sandy bed of the canyon to reassure himself that the trail still led as he was galloping.

Some five miles had been passed over, and he neared the scene of the recent fierce fight with the Apaches under El Orso; when, as he was passing over a space of soft sand, which gave out no sound from the fast flying hoofs of his horse, his keen ear detected a sound that caused him to jerk his steed to its haunches, and listen intently.

There could be no mistake. The fierce and exultant yells of the Apaches sounded clearly from the direction of the range, and the heart of the brave scout sprung to his throat, his brain reeled, and he came near falling from his horse. He now realized that, in all probability, the "Angel" was again in the power of the ruthless savages; and he, alone, and unaided, could not rescue her, except under cover of night.

He knew that it had not been Indians that had stolen Lena from the basin; but he reasoned that the outlaw whites who had abducted her, had been, together with herself, captured by the vengeful few of the Apache war-party, who perhaps had been forced to remain in the vicinity of their recent defeat on account of their wounds, or their wounded comrades.

Quickly dashing up a small wash-out that led toward the range from the canyon, the giant scout secreted his horse, and proceeded stealthily on foot.

No other mortal on earth could by their jeopardy or influence, cause him for a moment to lose one iota of self-possession in such a case, or cause him to hesitate when the course was plain before him.

But so attached had he become to Lena Reynolds, and such was his sympathy for her, in her deep and manifold afflictions, that his great heart was filled to bursting, and his brain was benumbed by this new and totally unexpected predicament and danger that had come upon her, when her physical condition was such that she ought not to have been out of her room.

With bowie and six-shooter clutched tightly in hand, and his senses strained to catch every sight or sound, on stole Giant George, like a panther creeping upon its prey.

Soon the fierce whoops and yells were close at hand.

With his very soul in his eyes, the huge scout crept into a dense thicket, on the very verge of the basin, when a strange and terrible sight presented itself, for which, however, he was partly prepared.

He had for some time realized that the sounds were made by squaws; and he knew that they were the women of the slain Apaches, who had lingered behind when their lords had met death, perhaps with the hope of getting an opportunity for revenge, or unwilling to return to another branch of the tribe.

From the time that Giant George satisfied himself that these infuriated squaws were ahead, he had given up all hope for Lena Reynolds; for he knew they would tear her limb from limb, after slow torture.

He staggered, therefore, into the thicket, and parting the branches, as though he was about to gaze on the mutilated form of the one he so revered, saw, to his surprise, that Lena was not there.

A terrible scene it was; but a second glance around caused the eyes of the scout to brighten, and he felt that retribution was not a farce after all.

That which he saw was more than two score hideous Apache squaws, their long hair flying wild, and tossed in the air by a hellish dance, as they circled around a roughly-dressed white man, whom they had secured to a stake in the middle of the basin.

It required but a moment's reasoning to prove to Giant George that the man at the stake belonged to the gang that had abducted Lena Reynolds, and that he had been detailed to lead pursuers on a false trail.

In proof of this, two fully-equipped horses stood below, secured to cedars. The saddles and bridles were of Texas make, and upon one of them was bound a large stone.

All was now plain to the giant scout.

He saw that he had been cunningly duped.

The face of the man at the stake was the pallor of death, and his eyes were staring from their sockets, as the squaws, with fiendish yells, drew their short camp-knives to scarify him, as they passed him in their hellish dance.

The captive was stripped to the waist, and from neck to belt his skin was white.

This caused Giant George to linger for an instant.

This man was bad; but what had made him so? Perhaps bad influences in youth.

He had most certainly been acting for another, in misleading those who sought to save Lena Reynolds; and he by no means deserved the terrible fate that was arranged for him.

The eyes of the squaws flashed fury, and the scout knew that a prolonged and most horrible torture awaited the doomed man.

These thoughts flashed in a moment through the brain of Giant George, and his decision was made as quickly.

Leveling his revolver, without hesitation, he pulled the trigger, and the head of the captive fell forward upon his breast, the bullet having pierced his forehead, and death ensuing instantly.

As the sharp report rung through the basin every squaw stopped and gazed upward in amazement and apprehension. Then, as they comprehended the object of the shot, and turning about, saw their captive was dead, a blood-curdling and terrible yell burst simultaneously from them. But as that yell sounded, five shots in quick succession were fired by the giant scout into the hideous horde, changing their yells to howls as a number of them fell pierced by the bullets.

Like avenging furies, a score of the maddened hags sped, with vengeful whoops, to a point in the basin from which they could reach the level, in hot pursuit of the one who had robbed them of their victim and slain some of their number, but Giant George was now galloping like a madman back down the canyon, well knowing that the abductors of Lena Reynolds had conveyed her through the great rocky gorge that split the range at Dead Man's Gulch.

CHAPTER XI.

SAVED AS BY FIRE.

THE presence of men in that dreary, rocky gorge, known as Dead Man's Gulch, was not half so deep a mystery as the fact that these men knew of the proposed visit of Lena Reynolds to her brother's grave—for they must have known it, else why had precautions been taken to mislead pursuers.

Who they were, and why they had risked so much to gain possession of the person of the "Angel," were puzzling enigmas that Giant George strove in vain to solve.

She had but a few days before arrived from St. Louis, and these men must, as a matter of course, be strangers in the vicinity. This caused affairs to appear more unaccountable and strange than ever.

That they were outlaws the scout was positive—probably stragglers from some bandit band down the range, who, hearing about the wealth of the benefactress of Sardine-box City, had captured her in hope of ransom.

This was the only reasonable solution of the mystery.

That there had been two men engaged in the business the "sign" showed, but whether the man who had taken upon himself the task to mislead pursuers, and who had been captured by the Apache squaws, was one of the pair, none could say.

Certainly, there was no organized band in the vicinity, for the total annihilation of the band of El Capitan had been known far and wide, and would prevent any other such organization from locating in the vicinity for some time to come, even were the "citz" of Sardine-box to "strike it rich."

Giant George had not the remotest idea of going for more help, feeling that, single-handed and alone, he could cope with success against the possibly three or four outlaws, who might be hiding in the rocks with their captive.

The pallid, anguish-stricken face of Lena Reynolds was ever before his mind's eye, urging him onward, and his great fear was that she would die in the hands of the dastards who had carried her off.

Little did George dream that Capitan Black, the notorious bandit who had escaped from the vicinity of Tucson, after nearly all his gang had been shot or hanged, was in the Pinaleno Range with the remnant of his men; that he had, that very day, received a half-dozen outlaws into his band, and was preparing to destroy the furnaces and quartz-mill recently received in Sardine-box City, having been hired to do so by a cousin of Lena Reynolds—a wretch who sought revenge on those who had saved his relative from death, thereby preventing him from enjoying her wealth; his, by law, at her demise.

Had Giant George known this, and also that Carlos La Grange, the cousin of Lena, had fol-

lowed her and himself from St. Louis, and that he was now in a cave at the barren bend, the abduction of the "Angel" would have been no mystery; but the mind of the scout would have been ten times more tortured than it was.

George's chief anxiety was in regard to the feeble state of Lena's health, for he did not once entertain the thought that a white man lived on earth who would do her bodily harm after he had once so much as gazed into her eyes.

Thus thinking and reasoning, he dashed onward, his horse panting with exertion, eventually reaching the gulch, up the dark depths of which he rode, then into the basin, and on beneath the sighing pines that sheltered the graves of Sam Lawrence and poor Terrif.

Here he quickly dismounted, threw off saddle and bridle, leading the animal into a *motte* on the west side of the basin, within which was a clear grass-grown space, where, securing the end of the lariat to a limb, he left his steed to rest and feed.

Reloading his revolver and loosening his bowie in its sheath, Giant George now sprung up the broken northwest side of the basin and bounded like a mountain-goat up the rock-bound gorge of the Pinaleno Range.

We will now return to the cave at the barren bend, where we left Lena Reynolds senseless upon her couch.

The young man who reeled into the cave chamber upon the entrance of Bud, Jim and the Indian, with their fair captive, was none other than Carlos La Grange, the nearest living relative of Lena Reynolds.

He was a dissipated youth about town in St. Louis, and frequented gambling-houses, having brought his father to grief and the grave by his lawless and disgraceful life.

He had several times been saved from prison and conviction on a charge of forgery; his father sacrificing large amounts of money in doing so, thus nearly impoverishing himself.

Carlos had never seen fit to visit at the Lawrence mansion, after the father of Lena had met with heavy losses in investments, brought about by Edward Willoughby, afterward known as El Capitan.

The latter, previous to his going West with Sam Lawrence, had been a boon companion of Carlos.

Not until the death of Lena's near relatives, did young La Grange conceive the idea of profiting by his relationship to her; and he would not have dreamed of so doing, had not stories passed from lip to lip in regard to the vast wealth she had brought from Arizona, and the extensive and paying mining interests in which she was engaged.

Once having formed the resolution of following his widowed cousin, Carlos was not slow in carrying it out. Well supplied with funds, he entered Sardine-box City in the night, accompanied by two desperate characters whom he had engaged in his service, and learning that Lena had been captured by Apaches, his joy knew no bounds.

But when one of the "citz" rode in later, and reported that she had been saved by Giant George, the young man was furious, and with his two companions took to the mountains to plot revenge upon the scout, and lay plans for the capture of his cousin.

Here he fell in with Capitan Black and his men, and bribed the bandit to assist him.

The cave in the barren bend was discovered, and the renegade Apache being the only occupant, he was engaged as guide, and presented with a number of articles which won him willingly and eagerly to their service.

When Jim placed Lena Reynolds upon the couch, and Carlos La Grange staggered into the chamber, the latter did not fully appreciate the importance of the capture or the occasion; but enough sense remained in his muddled brain to cause him much self-gratulation, and to wish to reward his instruments.

This liberality, however, was occasioned as much through fears for his personal safety as aught else; as the desperate characters, with whom he was now associated, inspired him with dread and terror, although he strove to conceal the feeling.

He feared, and with good reason, that he would be murdered for his money, and he drank to excess nearly all the time, leaving everything to Capitan Black, whom he enjoined to destroy the wagon-train his cousin had sent to Sardine-box City, and to blow up the Slip-up Mine, besides securing the person of Lena Reynolds, and delivering her up to him at the cave.

That Capitan Black had full confidence in being well paid for his hazardous work, has been

proved by his expeditious action, and his well contrived and carried out plans.

Bud and Jim gathered up the gold eagles, thrown by La Grange, as quickly as possible; the Indian disdaining to struggle for the yellow dross, which, however, would not have been the case had it been silver. Then the two bandits grasped their rifles from one corner, Bud saying impatiently:

"Come on, Jim! Cap'll be es mad es ther dickens if we're not on hand ter back him et ther big shin-dig near ther Slip-up. We'll hev hot work thar, pard!"

"Mebbe so, Bud; but we hes ther dead-wood on ther 'citz.' But, I'm with yer. So long, Satan!"

With these words, the two dashed from the cave, and down the range; leaving Lena, La Grange, and the renegade Indian, its sole occupants.

For some moments after the departure of Bud and Jim, Satan stood contemplating the forms of the unconscious woman and the drunken man.

"Waugh!" he exclaimed, turning away at last; "bad medicine—heap bad medicine!"

Out from the cave stalked the renegade red, and filling his pipe, ensconced himself between two rocks facing the barren vale; dreaming not of danger, and caring nothing for those within the cavern, as scalp were valueless to him now.

Thus the Apache sat for at least an hour and a half, as silent and immovable as the rocks at his side; when suddenly, not ten feet from his position, out from a cleft that wound downward to the base of the range, sprung Giant George, knife in hand!

Quick as a flash of light, the deadly shaft of the Indian was lifted to the string; but, ere the feathered end kissed the paint-daubed cheek, the bright bowie of the giant scout shot through the air, and was buried to the hilt in the bronzed breast of the appropriately named renegade red.

Bow and feathered shaft fell from the hands, that quickly clasped the handle of the torturing blade; and, with his last strength, he wrenched the steel from his severed vitals, throwing it out upon the rocks, where it fell with a clang from his nerveless grasp. The hot blood spurted in a crimson arch into the air, and a horrid death-yell echoed and re-echoed from crag to crag, and through the rocky gorge.

The death-filming eyes, from out their framework of gypsum and vermilion, glared hideously for a moment upon the form of the scout; then, as his hands feebly sought to draw his scalping-knife, he fell forward, and rolled into a cleft of the mountain side.

Full an hour lay Carlos La Grange upon the floor of the cavern, after the departure of Satan; then, with much exertion, and not a little profanity, he gained a sitting posture, and gazed around him for some time before he seemed to recall his whereabouts.

Soon, however, his glance rested upon the couch, and a devilishly exultant look overspread his face, as he recognized the recumbent form of Lena Reynolds.

After several attempts he regained his feet, and swaying back and forth, clutched frantically at the couch to save himself from another fall, but in vain, for down he went, his temple striking against the corner of the roughly-made structure, causing the blood to flow profusely.

Mumbling out a volley of curses, he crawled upon hands and knees over the floor, and through the archway, where he had entered at the sound of the approach of the men with their captive.

Soon he reappeared, a bottle in one hand.

Holding it to his lips, he took a long draught; then paused a moment, and repeated the dose.

Waiting a moment or so for the liquor to fire his blood and strengthen his nerves and muscles, he gained his feet. This time he walked slowly and hesitatingly toward the couch, as though not confident of keeping his feet.

Reaching it, he again drank, and then placed the bottle upon the floor, waving his hand in the air dramatically, as he addressed the still senseless Lena Reynolds:

"Welcome, fair coz—welcome to my mountain home! Dash me, but I'm most (*hic*) 'fer-nally rejoiced to see you; so much so that, by all the gods, you shall never (*hic*) leave hit! I mean it."

"It's a cussed long chase you've led me, and forced me into (*hic*) rougher company than I ever met, even in old St. Louis, which is saying (*hic*) a great deal."

"Guess I'll take (*hic*) 'nother drink, for I see

we don't understand each other. Here's your very good health—you need it bad. There don't, in fact, seem to be (*hic*) life 'nough in you to make it murder to give you a slip along the (*hic*) trail."

"Here goes (*hic*), here's at you!"—drinking again. "Now, my blackbird with a white face, I don't (*hic*) believe you're asleep. I believe you're shamming. Do you (*hic*) know why I had you brought here?"

Just then the death-yell of the Indian rung through the cavern with horrible vividness, and strange echoings, causing Carlos La Grange to turn pale as death and cease his harangue; but he again grasped the bottle and took a deep draught, not noticing the stealthy step in the outer passage. He then stood and listened.

The giant scout knew that he had now traced the dastardly abductors to their lair, but he hesitated at the entrance of the cave, for there was yet a mystery to unravel.

He had discovered evidences of a number of men, but, as far as he could see, there was but one in the cavern.

From his position George could not see the form of Lena, although the couch was in view, the raised back being toward him.

However, he was soon able not only to locate her, but to learn much to astonish and infuriate him; for again La Grange spoke, evidently having forgotten the yell, or attributing it to one of the peculiar whims of the Indian guide.

"I asked you, Mrs. Reynolds," repeated Carlos, "if you knew why I had brought you here, but you (*hic*) repudiate my words. I'll tell you!"

"I am your nearest relative. If you die, I shall inherit your (*hic*) wealth; and I tell you, you're (*hic*) 'bout to die. You shall never leave this cave. I shall kill you with my own hand! I am bracing myself up with whisky to do so."

"I did hope the (*hic*) 'Paches would torture you to death, and save me the trouble. But then (*hic*) cussed Sardines saved you. I'll have my revenge too, for their (*hic*) interference."

"I've hired Capitan Black and his men to (*hic*) smash the mill and machinery you bought with the money I ought to (*hic*) have. And I'll have their infernal mine blowed up this very (*hic*) night."

"By this time, the infernal Sardines are being shot down like (*hic*) dogs at the mine; and you've got to die now, before my resolution fails me!"

As Carlos La Grange thus spoke, he drew a glittering dagger, and climbed upon the couch; raising the steel over the breast of the corpse-like and senseless Lena Reynolds.

Like a panther bounding upon its prey, sprung Giant George, his teeth set, and his eyes blazing with long pent-up fury; the strength of a half a dozen men was in his sinewy and gigantic frame, as with a yell of exulting triumph and ungovernable madness he caught the villainous Carlos in his iron grasp, and held the quaking and horror-stricken wretch at arm's length above his head. Then, turning, he rushed with him out of the cavern.

Out along a rocky crag bounded the scout; no mercy in his flashing eyes, until, reaching its edge, he stood upon the same, holding the fear-paralyzed, terror-benumbed wretch above his head, but in such a position that he could view the awful abyss yawning before him—the deep declivity of fully a hundred feet, down to the jagged rocks below!

For a moment, the scout thus held him.

Then with terrible force, the wretched La Grange was shot through the air, far out over that awful height, striking with sickening thud upon the rocks below, and was crushed into a shapeless mass.

Five minutes later, down the mountain-side rushed Giant George, holding fast clutched in his brawny arms, as a mother would her child, Lena Reynolds, the Angel of the Pinaleno Range!

CHAPTER XII.

DING-DONG.

"DOG-GONE ther hull lay-out! I swan hit does 'pear thar never will be nothin' run smooth roun' this hyer condemned burg!"

Thus spoke, in soliloquy, Marm Holbrook, as she twisted and turned about in her bake-oven, into which her terror had driven her when she discovered the "Terrantaler o' Taos" stretched out asleep behind the bar, where she had expected to have found her troublesome husband, Hank.

After great difficulty, the good lady succeeded in getting into a half-reclining position, facing

the entrance to the oven; her back hair, which she rewound into a pug, acting as an apology for a pillow.

In this position, beyond the possibility of being assailed, or taken at a disadvantage, the landlady of the "Nugget" again broke out in muttered soliloquy.

"Dod-rot thet cantankerous, overgrown, long-legged, slab-sided, smash-faced, dirty pilgrim what's laid hisself out ahint our bar fer a snooze, arter prob'ly pourin' down a quart o' ther best-est bug-juice we hes gut!

"Whar, in thunderation, c'u'd Hank hev dis-'peared ter! He orter be hove inter ther canyon, an' then ther burg 'ud stan' a show ter progress.

"I b'lieve he's es bad es ever Jonah war. Thar I goes on Bible fac's, when nothin' o' thet sort orter be slung inside o' ten mile o' Sardine-box City; fer thar ain't nobuddy 'ceptin' ther 'Angel' thet's fitted ter mention ther Good Book! Thar ain't no redemption fer none o' ther 'citz,' I don't believe; an' I've hyer myself ontill I ain't fit ter 'sociate with meetin'-house folkses. I swan, I sh'u'd tremble my back-hair down, ef a gospel-slinger, es Hank calls ther preachers, sh'u'd gaze at me.

"Hyar I am a gittin' so dang'd desp'rit' w' ther goin's on thet I cuss es often es Cap'n Kid ever did—I'm a bettin' on bit!

"I'm plum worried ter death all ther time, an' I don't see no show fer things ter glide 'long any diffrunt. Ther 'Angel,' I most know, air a-goin' ter die, an' leave me; an' then what'll I do? Ther hull burg 'll git stavin' drunk ag'in, soon es ther mersheeny air up; an' ef ther 'Slip-up' pans out well arterwards, thar 'll be another jamboree. I hev ter hunt some hole every time, an' a griz' b'ar 'll chaw me up yit—I'm dead sure on it!

"I wonder whar ther dickens thet big cuss come from? He's 'bout es sizz es Giant George; an' thet 'minds me. I wish ter gracious George 'ud come back, an' g'in him a h'ist outen ther 'Nugget.' Hit's dang'd strange ter me thet ther 'Angel' can't stay ter ther burg an' not, go up ter Dead Man's Gulch ag'in, whar she gut tuck on't afore, by them or'nary Panthers!

"Sam's gone dead, an' thet's ther eend on it. She can't fotch him back. I reckon though, thet George an' Jack kin take keer on her.

"Thar's another botheration I didn't think on—they 'tends ter go ter Tucson, ter take Warnitta an' Marietta back hum, an' when they's gone thar'll be nobuddy in Sardine-box City thet's 'sponsorable er kin be 'pended on, fer Tom Jones air a-gittin' ter suck down bug-juice most es bad es Hank.

"O-o-o b, Lordy! I ain't a-goin' ter borry trouble, fer hit comes fast 'nough. I hain't slep' fer three nights, w' ther goin's on, an' I vow I'll take a nap now; fer this hyer's ther quietest an' safest place I've foun' yit.

"Hit's ormighty strange I never thought o' ther bake-oven afore. I won't say, 'Now I lay me,' fer hit ain't a fit place. Dang yer, Hank Holbrook! I'll fix yer when I git a show et yer. Gilt!—yer cantankerous—long-legged—mashed-face—cuss! I'm—er—meetin'-house—"

Thus ending her peculiarly worded soliloquy, the poor weary soul sunk into a quiet slumber.

While she thus slept the two Castilian women arrived, secured their horses near the oven, unconscious of the landlady's presence, and entering by the rear door, passed up to their apartment.

As Arizona Jack had guided them up from the canyon to the vicinity of the boulder, the rifle-shots, fired by the bandits upon the "citz" at the Slip-up Mine struck their ears, and with a cry of amazement, their escort had left them, galloping off toward the range.

With the knowledge that Lena Reynolds was in the power of lawless men, probably belonging to the same band who were now fighting the "citz," and being unable to account for the absence of Marm Holbrook, and the deathlike stillness that ruled the "Nugget" and the street outside, the situation of Warnitta and her daughter was truly deplorable. Nervous and hysterical as their recent experiences had made them, they were quite unfitted to encounter any further peril or trouble.

It was dusk as Arizona Jack left the two women at the canyon and galloped toward the range.

The last volley of rifle-shots fired at the "citz" had sounded but faintly in his ears, owing to the nature of the ground, before he reached a point at which his horse could descend into the gulch by which the Slip-up Mine was reached; and, at this very moment, as he was about to urge his steed downward, the mass of terrified oxen rushed in a wild stampede

along the bed of the deep chasm below his position.

Jack understood fully that there was trouble; it was not reasonable to suppose otherwise, but the character of the enemy and their object was a mystery.

However, he was not to remain long ignorant of the facts of the case; for, in the twilight gloom, he soon discovered the "citz" making their way stealthily along the north side of the gulch toward him.

Greatly puzzled and amazed, Jack spurred down to meet and question them.

"What is the meaning of this stampede and firing, Tom Jones?" he demanded, greatly impressed by the stern and grief-stricken faces before him.

"Hit means, Jack," answered the sheriff, "thet a party o' bellyuns, hid in ther rocks, 'bove ther Slip-up, hev shot half a dozen on us, stampeded ther oxens, an' we hesn't bin able ter freeze our peepers onter them."

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Jack. "Who can they be, Tom?"

"C'u'dn't say, pard Jack; but we-'uns ain't a-goin' ter stan' like a passel o' dang'd fools, an' be shot in our tracks. Whar in thunderation air Giant George? He mought think o' some way o' sarcumventin' ther condemned cowardly rock-crawlers."

This question brought back to Jack's mind, the fact that the giant scout had gone up the canyon alone, on the trail of Lena Reynolds and her abductors; and his concern and perplexity were doubled. He was at a loss, whether to inform the "citz" of the outrage up the range, or not; but a moment's reflection decided him in the affirmative.

"Boys of Sardine-box City," he said; "troubles have never come singly upon you in the past, and this afternoon's work is no exception to the rule."

"You know that Mrs. Reynolds insisted upon visiting her brother's grave, at Dead Man's Gulch. You know also, that Giant George and myself, together with Marietta and her mother, accompanied her; and now, I am forced to explain her absence and that of George."

"Marietta and Warnitta, I have just escorted to Sardine-box City, and Giant George is alone, up the range, toward the point where we fought the Apaches."

"He is on the trail of a miscreant who needs hanging. Boys, the Angel of the Range has again been carried off by lawless men, and George is on their trail alone!"

A series of heavy groans broke from the startled citizens, while Tom Jones cried out, in mingled grief and astonishment:

"Dog my cats!"

For a moment all stood still, thunder-stricken at the terrible state of affairs. They had passed through so many dangers, and suffered such privation in keeping up the burg, having just begun to see the silver lining of the cloud of adversity that had so long hung over it, that this disastrous attack, coupled with the knowledge just imparted, that their benefactress was again in the power of lawless men—all this completely unmanned them for the time.

But, when each recalled the pallid face of the "Angel," and realized that she could not be expected to survive any harsh treatment, and also that the dastardly assassins who lurked in the vicinity of the mine would probably destroy the machinery, and with it all hopes of future prosperity—when these two probabilities were fully realized by them, there arose simultaneously a yell of frenzied madness and desperation. Then it was, that Arizona Jack saw that the "citz" were eager for revenge, and he cried out:

"Come on, boys! Come on to the burg, and get your rifles! We'll drive these devils from the mine, or die in the attempt. The mill and furnace must be saved. We'll trust Giant George to bring back safe the Angel of the Range!"

Another yell greeted Jack's proposition—a yell of determination, mingled with relief, at having a leader whom they all knew feared nothing, and who had the brains to plan as well. So, led by Jack, all proceeded toward Sardine-box City.

The first yell given by the "citz" awakened Marm Holbrook, who sprung up, striking her head against the roof of the oven, and causing a deep and meaning exclamation of mingled pain and surprise to burst from her lips.

"Bless my soul!" she cried out. "Whar, in ther name o' Gee-hoss a-fat, air I this tripp'?"

Feeling about her, for it was quite dark in the oven, she soon recalled the near past; and

with great difficulty she forced herself head-foremost out from the bake-oven, and then, standing erect, smoothed out her dress and apron, and arranged her back hair as well as she could under the circumstances.

Then she stood a moment in deep thought, gazing toward the "Nugget." At last she exclaimed:

"Now I've stud this hyer biz jist 'bout es long es I'm goin' ter. I'm dang'd ef any long-legged, long-hair'd, slab-sided whisk' sucker shall keep me outen my own ranch; an' put on airs, drinkin' our bug-juice, an' then snoozin' off ahint ther bar. I swar! hit's enough ter make any meetin'-house woman swar!"

"I'm a-goin' fer him on ther jump. I've gut my dander up—dang'd ef I hain't—'bout ther same pitch es when I blazed w' ther ole shot-gun, an' made one o' El Capitan's Panthers chaw dirt front o' ther 'Nugget.' Hyer goes fer ther strappin' big hefty snoozer!"

With these words, Marm Holbrook hastened into her kitchen, procured a bucket of not over-clean water, and stole softly into the bar.

It was now nearly dark. The heavy snoring still sounded. Making her calculations as to the position of the burly stranger, Marm Holbrook held the bucket directly over his head, leaned upon the bar, and instantly reversed the vessel.

As the contents were emptied, the landlady dropped the bucket, and ran for dear life through the kitchen-door and up the stairs, rushing into the back chamber and closing the door, fast bolting it.

The noise thus made caused Warnitta and Marietta to shriek with terror; and these sounds so frightened the hostess—she not being aware of the return of the two women—that she shot under the bed, thinking perhaps that the burly stranger had made a change of base and taken up his quarters in the chamber. There she lay, panting with exertion, and afraid to move.

Marietta and her mother, not being able to recognize the intruder, were palsied with horror, and lay clinging to each other in silence.

The libation, so generously poured by Marm Holbrook, nearly smothered the "Terrantaler o' Taos"; and in his convulsive struggles to regain his breath, he nearly killed poor Hank.

The latter did not comprehend the situation, but the Tarantula sprung erect, and the screams of the women, above stairs, brought his danger vividly to mind. Giant George might have returned, and if so, might recognize him. Not only this, but the compact he had made with Capitan Black had been broken.

"Dog-gone my iron heart! I must 'tend ter biz."

Grasping a decanter, and making sure it was full of liquor, the Tarantula rushed out through the kitchen-door, and vaulting into his saddle, urged his horse along in the rear of the shanties until clear of the town.

Then he pointed directly to toward the Slip-up Mine, secreting himself, when he discovered the approach of Arizona Jack and the "citz." He then proceeded onward, stopping, however, now and then, to drink from the decanter, and exclaim:

"Dang'd ef I doesn't fotch back ther ding-dong inter my iron heart!"

CHAPTER XIII.

NOT ON TIME.

FIFTEEN minutes after the Tarantula of Taos left the Nugget Hotel, the moon arose above the distant plain, a full round orb of silvery brightness, illuminating Sardine-box City, and enabling the "citz," who had groped their way blindly along the wash-out, to see that they had wandered from the direct route.

"Here we are, boys!" exclaimed Arizona Jack. "Here's the stage trail, and we'll have a show now to corral those cowardly sneaks, if they stand their ground."

"I'm afeerd they'll mash the bestest part o' ther mersheeny," said Tom Jones, dubiously. "If they does, an' we-'uns catches them, we'll hev another Lynch pic-nic down et ther boulder by ther canyon."

"I'd give five years of my life to see Giant George," asserted Jack, keeping his horse at a pace to allow conversation with the "citz" who were on foot.

Down the decline toward the street they went, in a fast walk, all huddled together; when, just as they neared the first shanties in the line, up from the canyon dashed a horse-man, whom all, in a moment, recognized as Giant George.

A yell of joy burst from every throat, and

sombreros were thrown into the air, as Lena Reynolds was discovered, held in the scout's embrace.

Arizona Jack galloped to meet him; and was warned, by a gesture from George, against any expressions in regard to the recent danger the "Angel" had passed through.

"Thank Heaven! you have returned, pard George!" said Jack quickly. "How is Mrs. Reynolds? I feared the trip would be too much for her."

"I am feeling very well, I thank you," said Lena, herself. "In fact I have not been so strong for some days. The ride, although it prostrated me at first, has been a benefit."

Jack whirled his horse and made a gesture full of caution to the "citz" who approached; but this was unheeded, for, rough men though they were, they knew that any excitement would be injurious to their benefactress. Though it was very necessary that Giant George should know the state of affairs at the mine, and that without delay, all held their peace.

The giant scout, however, knew more than even the "citz" did in regard to the attack; for, as the reader is aware, he had heard the whole plot from the lips of Carlos La Grange, as the miscreant revealed his villainy over the couch of his intended victim in the cave.

This knowledge, coupled with the fact that he had heard the rifle shots, had caused George to gallop immediately to the "Nugget" and leave there his charge.

"Order the boys to get their rifles!" said Jack to the sheriff, in a whisper, as they went toward the hotel. Reaching it, he dismounted and rushed into the bar; striking a light, as Giant George gave a yell to summon Marm Holbrook.

As the candle flared up, illuminating the bar-room, the head of poor Hank appeared above the counter, his little eyes blood-shot, and his red and swollen features bruised by the rough treatment he had received when the Tarantula came so near being strangled by Marm Holbrook's shower-bath.

But, as the landlord recognized his friends, he raised himself to a standing position on the bar, although trembling greatly, and cried out in his piping voice:

"Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

"Shut up yer whisk'-trap, Hank," ordered Giant George. "Whar's Marm Holbrook?"

"Don't speak harsh to the poor fellow," pleaded Lena. "Hank, don't drink any more to-night, please."

"Cuss'd ef I does!" said the landlord, quickly, and a maudlin tear rolled down his red cheek.

"Run ther candle out kitchen-way, Jack!" said the giant scout. "I reckon Marm Holbrook air up-stairs wi' t'other weemin."

"Giant George! Ye-ou, Giant George! Run uphyer! Thar's a hellyun in ther bed, an' I'm under hit, an' dassent come out. He's a long-legged, slab sided, long-ha'r'd, whisk'-sucker, es big es yerself, ef he's any like his pard."

These words came in a half-smothered manner from one of the chambers, and Jack, candle in hand, sprung up two stairs at a time, and burst in the door.

Never were there more surprised women than the three in that apartment. The two Castilians having covered their heads with the bed-clothing, which prevented them from recognizing the voice of the landlady.

Notwithstanding the importance of preparing for a defense of the mine, and the danger that threatened it, Jack was compelled to laugh—as well as did Giant George and Lena—at seeing Marm Holbrook crawl out from under the bed, hardly believing her senses when she saw that, in place of a gigantic ruffian, it was Marietta and her mother who occupied the couch.

Smoothing her hair, Marm Holbrook gave vent to her thoughts and opinions at length, to the great amusement of Lena Reynolds, who to the joy of all, appeared much more like herself than she had done since her arrival in Sardine-box City.

Arizona Jack got a chance before George came up, to caution the two Castilian women against saying anything to Lena of her having been in the power of outlaws; for she had been unconscious the whole of the time, and knew nothing whatever in regard to it.

Leaving the women together, to reason out matters as best they might, Giant George and Arizona Jack hastened back to the bar, each helping himself to a drink in proportion to his size.

Hank, who strove to get down from the counter and wait upon them, was overcome by one of his shaky turns, during which he was obliged to use the greatest precaution in his movements or get a fall.

Tom Jones hastened in also, to "cuperate his in'ards," as he expressed it, taking a small demijohn out to the "citz," who, armed with their rifles, were ready and eager for Giant George to lead them to the mine.

The latter now hastened out into the street, and the "citz" gathered around him.

"Wa-al, boyees," said George coolly, "what's ther racket at ther Slip up?"

"Six o' our crowd turned up toes, an' nary one o' us pulled trigger," replied the sheriff. "Thar's a crowd o' hellyuns a-hidin' in ther rocks 'bove ther mine, an' they stampeded ther oxen onto us from the gulch. Then they let fly, without givin' us a show ter shoot. We hed ter levant on ther sly; but I'm incernated ter think they s'pose we air in ther shaft until yit."

"Wa-al, dang my cats!" said the scout. "I was prepared fer somethin' o' ther sort, but not fer any on yer 'lowin' them ter git ther dead-wood on yer!"

"Boyees, ther mersheenery air gone up, an' ther burg air bust'd, ef we-uns doesn't play a mighty fine game. I hes jist reskyed ther Angel from ther same outfit, an' sent a red an' a white over ther range."

"I found out thet Capitan Black, from Tucson-way, air ther cuss what's doin' this devilment; an' he's bin paid ter blow everythin' ter giblets."

"Now I hes swored thet Cap' Black shell hang onther mesquite down by ther bowlder, afore another sun-up, an' I means biz. We-uns must kerral ther hull caboodle. Thar's 'bout a baker's dozen on 'em, an' we'll scoop 'em in, er turn up toes a tryin'. But this ain't no time ter sling gab."

"Jack, ole pard, take a dozen o' ther boyees an' strike ther basin on ther south side, spreadin' out well, an' Tom an' I'll run 'em outen ther holes from the north an' down ther mounting."

"When yer hear a kiote yelp twicet, an' then onc't, yer'll know that me an' Tom is ready ter open ther big fandango."

"All right, pard. We'll fill the bill," said Jack.

Five minutes more, and the street of Sardine-box City was deserted; but over thirty determined men were making their way toward the range.

The death of their comrades, slain by their sides in a cowardly manner, served to infuriate them to frenzy, which increased each step they took toward the range.

Inured to savage war and every cunning strategy, their approach to the "Slip up" was as silent and stealthy as that of so many Apaches on the war-path.

Every bowlder, thicket and shadow was taken advantage of, and at times they crawled upon hands and knees to conceal their approach. But, to make their attempt more certain of accomplishment, a wide detour was made by both parties.

Giant George, with a part of his men, scaled the mountain-side in the rear of the positions occupied by the outlaws who had fired down upon the unsuspecting citizens.

Here and there, among the bowlders and cedars, from the north side of the basin, and up along the cliff, they crouched, a half-circle of hardy miners, with senses on the alert and ready to shoot down the first bandit who should reveal himself.

All were watchful, besides, to detect the approach of Arizona Jack and his party, across the basin to the south; but not a human being was in view, and all was as silent as death.

The wagon-tilts seemed not to have been removed, except where they had been displaced by the stampede.

This was noticed by those who had been present when the maddened mass of oxen had rushed through the basin, and communicated to Giant George, who was greatly relieved by the assurance.

The latter, after conferring with Tom Jones, decided that the outlaws must be ignorant of the retreat of the "citz" to the town, and believed them to be hidden in the rocks by the mine; or they would, ere this, have made an attempt to destroy the machinery, furnaces and mill.

Had they arrived sooner, however, the secret of the inaction of the outlaws under Capitan Black would have been no secret; for, as the latter had decided upon a descent from the mountain side, with the view of destroying the freight of the wagon-train, believing, from the silence, that the "citz" had retreated to the town, although they had not been observed, the gulch side hiding their retreat from view—believing this, he had decided upon immediate

action, when he observed the Tarantula ride up the south bank of the gulch, and guiding his horse into a thicket, reappear on foot, with a bottle in one hand, from which he drank, and then descended into the basin.

Rising erect, and climbing upon a bowlder, Capitan Black gave a whistle, sufficiently loud to reach the ears of the burly outlaw, whom he had bribed to blow up the mine.

The Tarantula sprung behind a wagon, on the instant; then, drawing his revolver, he looked up cautiously, and discovered his employer of the morning, who waved his sombrero over his head.

The Tarantula returned the salute, and strode toward the "Slip up" shaft; down the rough, uneven side of which he clambered. The outlaws, confident that he was making preparations to blow up the mine, and, in so doing, force upward a shower of rocks, which, in descending, would shatter the mill, furnaces, and other material, remained inactive, as we have seen.

It was a delay that was, to them, disaster and death.

Long they waited for some signal, or for the reappearance of the Tarantula; but he sat at the bottom of the shaft, gazing at the kegs of powder, and taking frequent drinks from the bottle. Evidently he was meditating upon the policy of proving true to Capitan Black, and listening to the "ding-dong of his iron heart."

The ruffian was speculating, in his whisky-born thoughts, whether "ther bestest part o' his 'natermy mightn't strike fire, ignite the powder, an' blow him 'bove ther flip flop of a buzzard's wing!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BLOW-UP MINE.

CAPITAN BLACK waited until his patience was exhausted. Then, infuriated at the non-appearance and masterly inactivity of the Tarantula, he gave a signal to his concealed men to descend to the basin, believing that the "citz" must have left the gulch, and were now in Sardine-box City.

This desertion of their valuable property he attributed to the want of a leader, and he felt sure that his plans had been carried out, by leading Giant George and Arizona Jack up the range on a false trail.

Their absence proved to him that Lena Reynolds had been captured, and was now in the cave, and the outlaw was anxious to perform the remainder of his task, for which he was to be liberally paid by Carlos La Grange, as soon as possible, and return to the barren bend.

The failure of the Tarantula to blow up the mine caused the bandit to be less prudent in his exasperation than he would otherwise have been; for he rushed down the mountain side, throwing all caution to the winds.

Clambering into the basin, he yelled:

"Shoot that big traitor in the mine, boys! Then smash things up in a hurry!"

Capitan Black and his men had not made half-a-dozen steps from their coverts, when two coyote yelps broke on the air, followed shortly after by a third.

Then came a low, rolling whistle, and the next moment, the "citz" made their way in the track of the outlaws, their thirst for revenge increased by the sight of their slain comrades behind the bowlders.

The outlaws had but just gained the basin, being between the north wall and the wagons, in the clear moonlight, when a fierce yell burst from the throat of Giant George, followed by the report of his rifle.

An answering yell rung out from every one of the "citz," on each side of the basin, and then came blinding sheets of flame and a rattling rifle fusillade, which laid three-fourths of the outlaws dead or writhing in agony in the bed of the basin.

"Kerral ther t'other cusses, an' don't prick thar skins!"

Thus yelled the giant scout as he sprung into the basin, and in a moment's time Capitan Black and three of his assassins—all that were able to stand—were bound with lariats and closely guarded. The "citz," in their fury, then riddled the wounded with bullets from their revolvers.

No time was lost in examining the freightage of the wagons, but, as far as could be discovered, none of the heavy castings had been broken by the oxen in their stampede. The tilts were now readjusted, and Giant George, feeling no further anxiety in regard to the safety of the mine, ordered the prisoners to be led forward and down the gulch.

Sullen and speechless, Capitan Black and his

companions in crime walked amid the victorious "citz," knowing full well that their fate was sealed.

On they went along the winding gulch into a wash-out, and thence in the rear of the shanties on the west, down to the huge boulder, which was shadowed by the branches of the big mesquite that had served, as Tom Jones put it, to "civerlize" several outlaws since the settlement of the burg.

Upon this very tree, the "citz" were, at one time about to hang Giant George himself, when he had come into the town in disguise, on the track of spies from the band of outlaws known as the "Panthers," who were "cleaned out" some three months previous to the opening of this narrative.

Upon arriving at the boulder, the four bandits were forced upon it, and the deadly nooses fitted about their necks in ominous silence; the stern, implacable faces of the "citz," lit up by the silvery moon, showing no sign of mercy. It was a weird and impressive scene.

The lariats were run over limbs, and the slack of the same grasped by brawny hands, ready and eager to hurry the murderers of their comrades into eternity.

"Capitan Black, an' yeou murderin' galoots—hev yer gut ary thing ter spoke, or ary pra'r's ter sing?"

Thus asked Tom Jones, becoming suddenly aware that his official capacity as sheriff ought to be brought to the front in some manner.

"Yer hes shot down some o' our 'citz' in cold bleed, an' yer war cotched in ther act o' tryin' ter bust this hyer burg, by smashin' ther mersheeneries o' ther 'Slip-up'; but yer slipped up on thet."

"Sides thet devilment, yer stoled ther Angel o' ther Range, an' would 'a' wiped her out, ef hit hedn't 'a' bin fer Giant George. Yer mought 'a' knowed yer couldn't buck ag'in' a burg what cleaned out ther 'Panthers' o' El Capitan."

"Hes yer ary word ter say ag'in' bein' strung up ter dry?"

"I'm not afraid to 'kick up and go under,' my impetuous friends," said Capitan Black. "All I regret is, that the instigator of this attack is not to be strung up with us. He is in a cave, with a renegade Indian, on the other side of the range."

"He is a coward, and I was a soft-headed fool to sell myself to him; but I was hard against the wall for 'dust.' Go ahead with your circus, boys! I can dance on nothing as well as any man."

"Dang'd ef he hain't gut sand!" said Tom Jones, in an aside, to Giant George.

"Hit's ther wrong sort o' sand," was the scout's reply; "er he wouldn't 'a' shot men in ther back, without givin' 'em a show ter shoot back, er ter say a pray'r. We doesn't want none o' thet sort o' sand in Arizona."

At this instant, a sheet of lurid flame shot upward, illuminating the towering peaks; then came a deafening explosion, as if the mountains were rent, and shaking the ground like an earthquake.

Every man sprung upward, as if he had received a powerful shock from an electric battery; and Capitan Black gave out an exultant cry as he exclaimed:

"There goes your old mine. The Ter—"

These were the last words of the outlaw chief; for the voice of Giant George rung out, as his face turned pale with fury:

"Jark 'em up, boyees! Jark ther bellyuns up!"

The next moment all four men hung in the air, kicking and struggling spasmodically; and before the life had left them, the ends of the lariats were secured to the trunk of the mesquite, and the "citz," in a scattering throng, rushed madly up the gorge to the "Slip-up" Mine, feeling positive that everything was ruined, and that, in consequence, the long averted catastrophe was upon them, and that Sardine box City would be a "busted burg."

They had not been gone five minutes, when, from out the cedars in the rear of the boulder, spurred the "Tarantula o' Taos," and made halt, sitting his horse and viewing the swaying corpses, as he said:

"Wa-al, dog-gone my iron heart, ef that ain't a neat job! Cap Black, I knowed yer war buck-in' ag'in' ther wrong crowd—yer war tew brash."

"Yer orter lingered et Tewson, fer hit ain't healthy hyer-a-ways fer yer sort o' humans. Gaze et me! I'm still a-floppin' like a bob-tailed buzzard."

"I never spills bleed, but ginerly talks my game ter death, which ain't no great harm. A leetle fire-works air 'bout all I 'dulges in, an' thet war a axerdunt. I must 'a' drap'd a piece

o' punk in ther dang'd ole shaft when I war a-smokin'."

"Hit ain't ther 'Slip-up' no more—hit's ther 'Blow-up.' Dang'd ef hit ain't more 'properate."

"I swan, I hates ter skute out inter perrarer ag'in all erlone, an' leave thet cuss Hank ter git away with all thet whisk' by hisself; but I must wander, a lonely orphun, meanderin' ther mountings."

"Howsomever, I doesn't keer a dang, long es ther whisk' lasts. Hyer's fun, boyees!"

So saying the burly ruffian drank, with a wave of his hand to the swaying dead.

"Ye're a onlucky set," he continued; "an' w'dn't do ter start a stiff-yard, er I'd cut yer down, an' plant yer. But I reckon ther citz doesn't keer ter hev another crap o' yer sort raised, 'ceptin' up a limb. But I must peregrinate. So long, boyees! Whoop-er-up! Whoop-er-e-e-e!"

And away went the Tarantula, the bottle glued to his lips, upheld at an angle of forty-five degrees. Soon he disappeared down the side trail into the dark depths of the canyon.

Much to the surprise and joy of Giant George and the "citz," they found, upon reaching the mine, that the rocks which had been thrown up by the explosion in the shaft—the origin of which was to all a mystery—had, fortunately, been most thrown to the south side of the basin; and, as far as could be seen, no great damage had been done to the freight, although some of the wagons were battered.

All returned to the burg, and found the women had not retired, but were awaiting reports, and greatly frightened at the explosion; but they were ignorant of the execution of the bandits, or of there having been any in the vicinity. Nor was Lena Reynolds yet aware that she had been in the power of the outlaws; never dreaming that Carlos La Grange had been nearer her than St. Louis.

The explosion having been explained as an accident, all were greatly relieved; and, much to the gratification of the "citz," the "Angel" came down into the street, and greeted them all kindly, taking a hand of each in turn.

She seemed, in a single day, and that a day of danger the most deadly—although she was oblivious of the fact—to have recovered much of her former health and spirits.

This caused Giant George the most extravagant joy; and after Hank had given the inevitable:

"Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!" and Lena had rejoined Marm Holbrook and the two Castilian women, the scout "set 'em up" for the crowd.

Not only this, but as the excitement prevented sleep, he induced Hank to take a demijohn outside, toward the "Slip-up," and all made a night of it.

Hank was, as usual, overcome and stupid; but he was kindly cared for by his friends, who laid him out on a boulder, to sleep the poison off.

Few there were, as the sun arose, who could keep their eyes open, the "citz" being scattered around the scene of the night's debauch in every conceivable attitude.

However, they did not long remain thus, for Tom Jones, who had gone to examine the scene of the explosion, came galloping madly toward the town, yelling like a fiend, and with each hand tightly clinched.

On, at headlong speed he dashed, spurring his horse at every bound, until the animal sprung in among the amazed "citz," who thought the sheriff had surely become insane.

Giant George grasped the bridle-rein, and brought the horse to so sudden a halt, that Tom was thrown over the animal's head; but still yelling, and with both hands clinched, the worthy sheriff rolled over and over, stood on his head, shrieked, whooped, howled, and laughed hysterically, until George at length caught him by the nape of the neck, and choked him into comparative sense—the "citz" collecting around in the greatest wonder.

"Hold yer mustangs now, Tom Jones," said Giant George. "What in thunderation hev struck yer! Hev yer got a conniption fit, er hev yer swallowed a bunch o' prickly pear! Spit her out speedy, an' no goin' roun' ther bush! W'at's thet yer clutchin' in yer hands?"

Panting with exertion and excitement, Tom, seeing there was no escape for him, opened his hands, displaying specimens of the richest gold quartz ever seen by any miner present.

"Whar in thunderation did yer git thet, Tom?" asked the scout quickly, his eyes brightening.

"Ther Slip-up war blowed up, yer know, last night!" yelled the sheriff, insanely.

"Wa-al," said George, "what of hit?"

"Ther hull side air blowed out o' ther shaft," shrieked Tom; "an' thar's a new lead—a new vein laid bare—the richest I ever see'd!"

"Somebody hold me! Somebody hold me, fer I'm goin' to hev a fit! 'Rah fer Sardine box City! 'Rah fer the 'Blow-up' Mine! 'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

The yells awoke Hank Holbrook, who sat up on the boulder; and, while winking and blinking like an owl at noontide, hardly realizing where he was, he yelled hoarsely:

"'Rah fer ther Angel o' Penarlayno Range!"

We need only say, at this time, that all was as Tom represented, and the "citz" were again almost wild with this fresh excitement.

Lena Reynolds partook of the general jollity; and, forgetting for the time, the griefs and trials of the past, entered with not a little spirit into the universal congratulation.

Marm Holbrook put on her "bestest" dress and apron, and vowed that "ef ther boyees hed struck so dang'd rich, they must slap up a meet-in'-house in Sardine-box City afore another moon."

The quarts-mill and furnaces were soon put in operation; and, in a short time after, the burg was in a most flourishing financial condition, with prospects very flattering for the future.

But what pleased all, as much as did the opening of the mine, and the discovery of the rich "lead," was that Lena Reynolds was evidently regaining health and strength.

And thus, in comparative prosperity and happiness, after the various dangers and privations they had passed, we will leave our friends for the present—all joyous, and full of high hopes for the future of Sardine box City, and especially Giant George, Marm Holbrook, and Lena Reynolds; the hero, mother, and "Angel," respectively, of that promising burg.

THE END.

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